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—Patricia McMahon Rice

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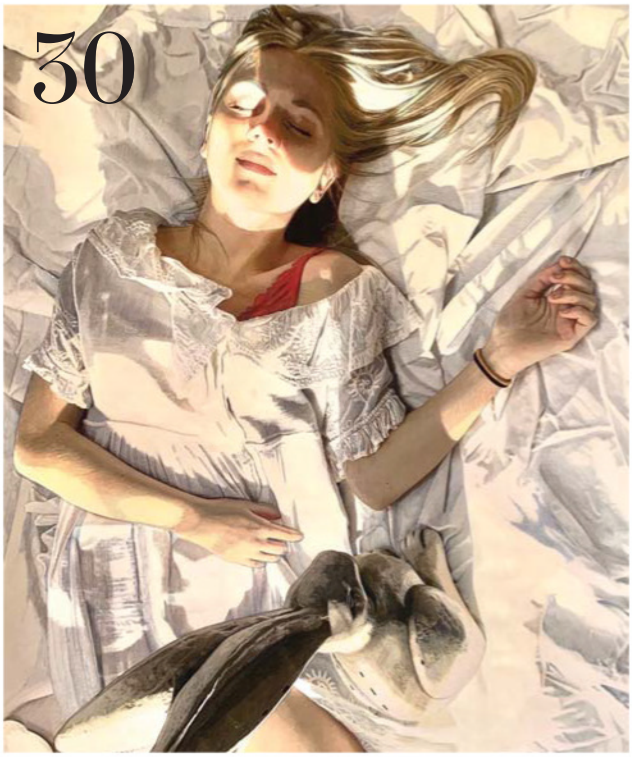

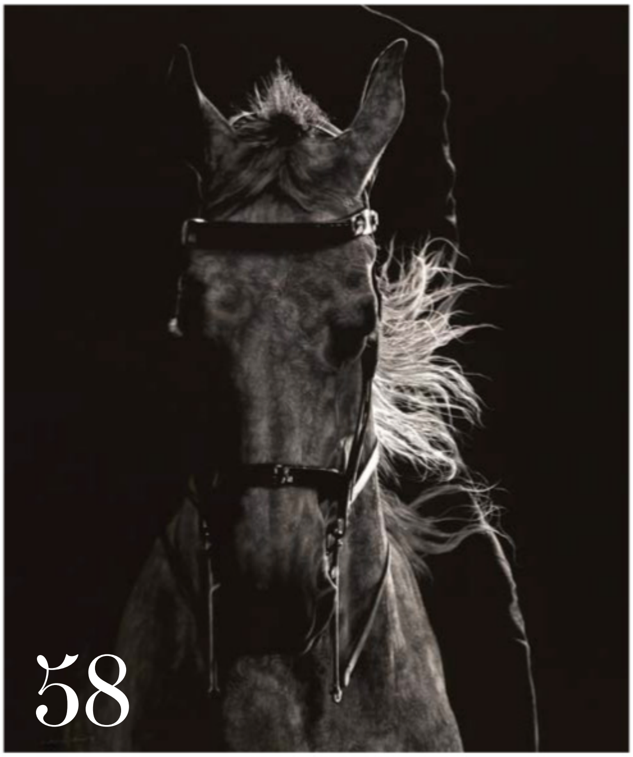

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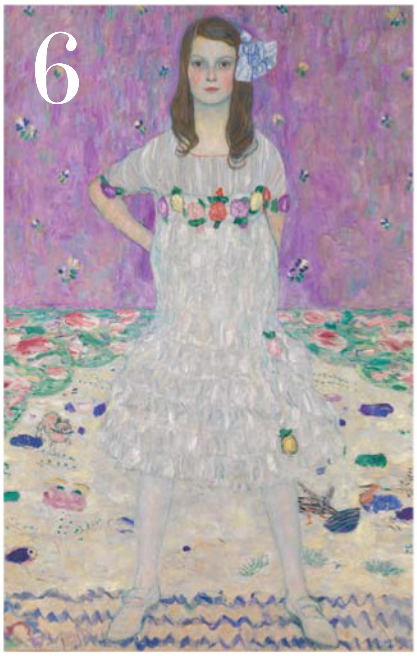

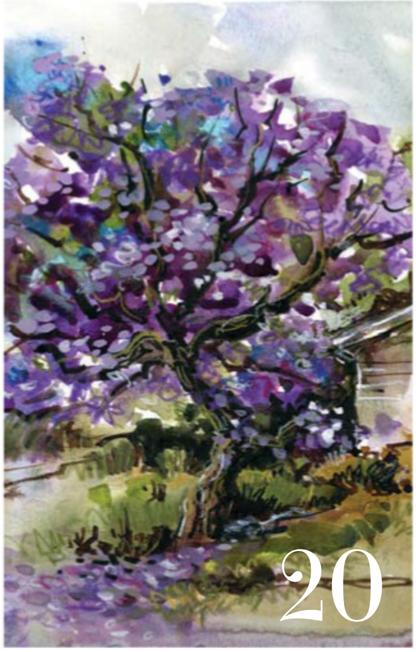

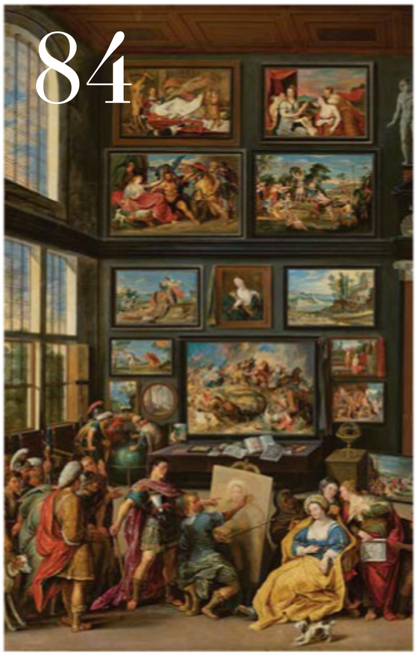

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ABOVE, FAR RIGHT: *PAELLAS PAINTING CAMPASPE* (DETAIL; OIL ON PANEL) BY WILLEM VAN HAECHT. FROM *THE ARTIST'S STUDIO: A CULTURAL HISTORY* (THAMES & HUDSON)

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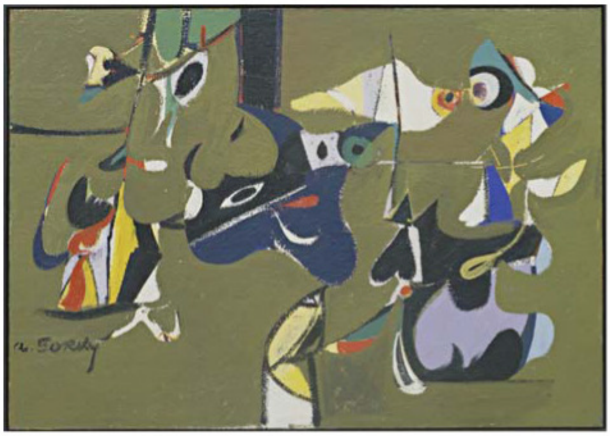
From The Editor



Searching our own personal histories can be a fruitful path for exploration. For artist Arshile Gorky (1904–48), memories of a childhood in Armenia inspired several works, including **The Garden in Sochi** (1941; oil on canvas, 44¼x62¼).

EXPLORE SOMETHING NEW

Every artist grapples at times with creative block. Even seasoned artists can struggle for motivation if they allow themselves to get too settled into a comfort zone. A pastel artist, Frank Federico (1928–2018), once shared with me that the way he avoided a feeling of stasis in his art-making was to embrace variety in his creative practices. Whether in the choice of media or subject, or even style, he fostered in himself a willingness to "change it up." You'll hear several of the winners of this year's Over 60 competition (page 30) express a similar sentiment. Linda Heath Clark, for example, began to experiment with abstraction to reignite her muse. "Finding something that shook up my approach to art," she says, "was just the kickstart I needed."

> "My recollections of Armenia open new visions for me. My art is therefore a growth art where forms, pines, shapes, memories of Armenia germinate, breathe, expand and contract, multiply and thereby create new paths for exploration."
>
> ARSHILE GORKY

In this issue, you'll be introduced to artists who work in a medium or format you may have yet to explore. Shalese Sands (page 58) is a wildlife artist who works in scratchboard to capture her subjects. It's a medium that offers a great capacity for capturing detail and the beauty of light. The work of Dina Brodsky (page 66) may inspire you to set aside that extra-large canvas to try working in the round, in a tiny 2x2-inch format. Or, you may choose to adopt the strategy of Lui Ferreyra (page 50), who moves between different media as way to continually kindle creative excitement. These artists' efforts remind us that nurturing an openness for investigation—a willingness to shake things up now and then, in big ways or small—is important and invites a sense of adventure into our work.

Anne Hevener

ANNE HEVENER
Editor-in-Chief

Artists Magazine

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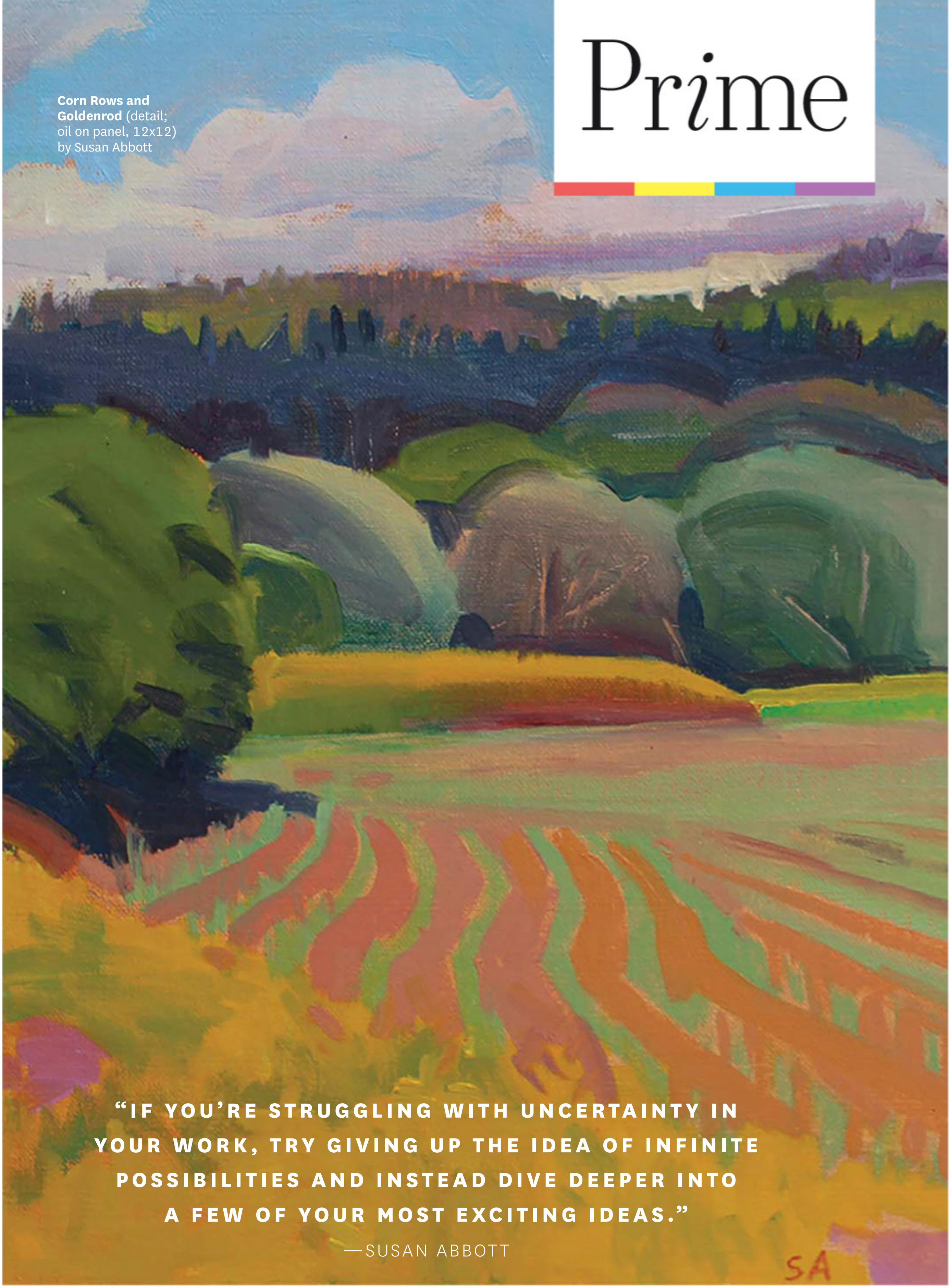


Corn Rows and Goldenrod (detail; oil on panel, 12x12) by Susan Abbott

> "IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING WITH UNCERTAINTY IN YOUR WORK, TRY GIVING UP THE IDEA OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES AND INSTEAD DIVE DEEPER INTO A FEW OF YOUR MOST EXCITING IDEAS."
>
> —SUSAN ABBOTT

Girl Power

Gustav Klimt's portrait of a child captures her blossoming poise and confidence.

BY Jerry N. Weiss

Endowed with a commanding presence, Mäda Primavesi was nine years old when Gustav Klimt (Austrian, 1862–1918) painted her portrait. Mäda's father, Otto Primavesi, was a banker, a man of means and a patron to avant-garde artists in Vienna. He commissioned Klimt to paint both his daughter and his wife, Eugenia. Klimt was apparently fond of his young sitter. Many years later, Mäda revealed that Klimt signed her autograph book. "The day is like night unless I see you," he wrote. Mäda lived until 2000, a few years shy of 100 years old.

Klimt's early work was created in a traditional, academic manner, albeit with an elegant decorative sense. By the late 1890s, his paintings became increasingly idiosyncratic in form and erotic in content. In the first decade of the 20th century, he often adorned his canvases with gold leaf. The resulting impression, seen most famously in *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, was that of refined decadence.

Mäda Primavesi
(1912–13; oil on canvas, 59x43½)
by Gustav Klimt

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, N.Y.; GIFT OF ANDRÉÉ AND CLARA MERTENS, IN MEMORY OF HER MOTHER, JENNY PULITZER STEINER, 1964

Mäda Primavesi is a later work. By this time, Klimt had dispensed with gold leaf, instead opting for flat planes of variegated pattern—mosaics of brightly colored pigment. Where once the contours had been sharply drawn, paint was now applied loosely, at times riotously, yet always bound to the strictures of design.

"There is nothing special about me," Klimt wrote. "I am a painter who paints day after day from morning to night. … Whoever wants to know something about me … ought to look carefully at my pictures." So we do, with pleasure.

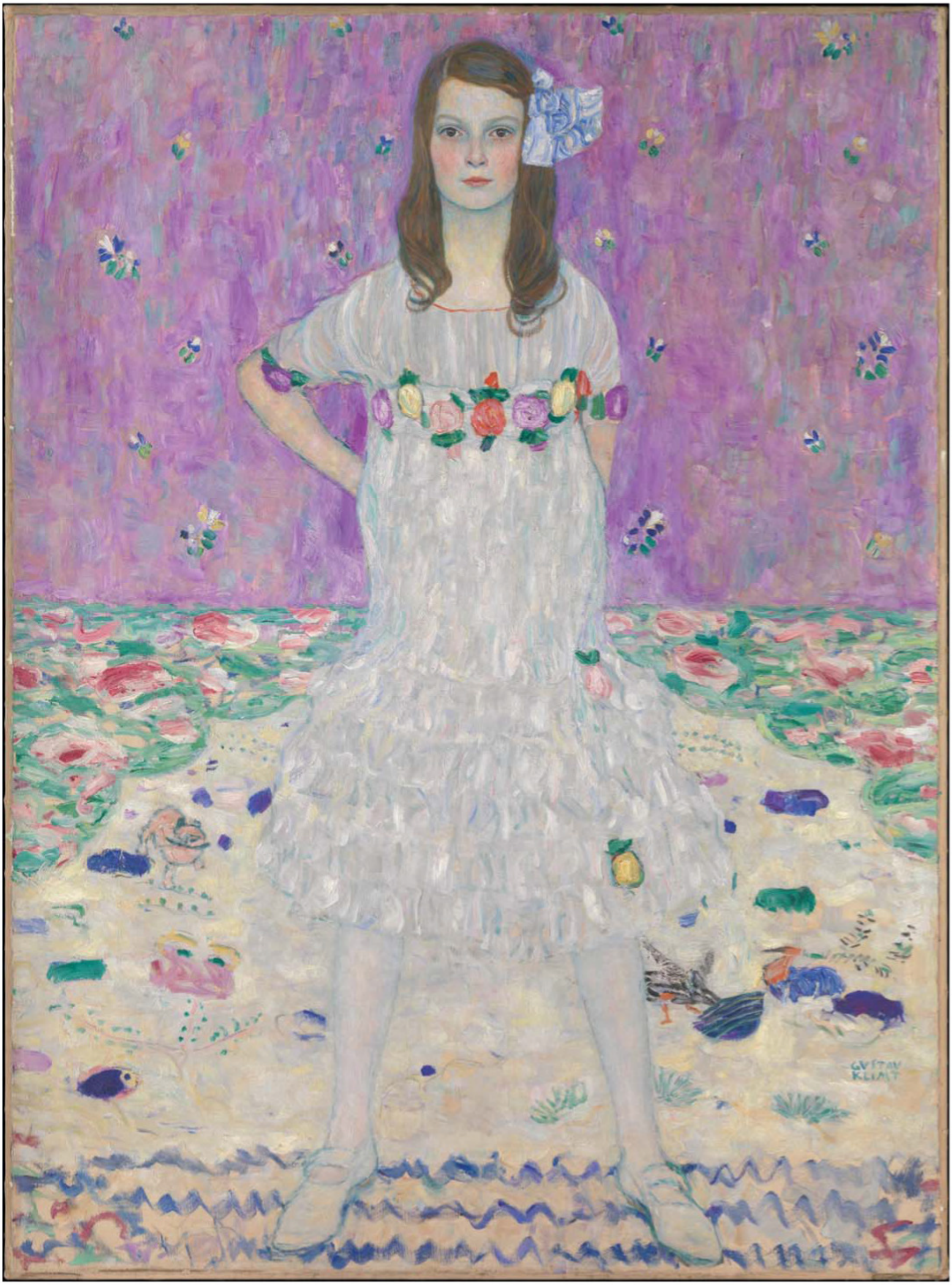
> "Mäda exists apart from the standard depictions of juvenile subservience. Perhaps the works closest in spirit were Velázquez's paintings of royal princesses, portraying a similar air of youthful assurance."

Mäda Primavesi is Klimt's only major portrait of a child. Mäda's confident stance has been routinely noted by art historians as unusual among Klimt's portraits. Moreover, Mäda exists apart from standard depictions of juvenile subservience. Perhaps the works closest in spirit are Velázquez's paintings of royal princesses, portraying a similar air of youthful assurance. Indeed, the center pattern of the rug upon which Mäda stands fans out like one of the Infanta's dresses.

The carpet pattern combines with Mäda's figure to create a pyramidal shape, the most stable possible design for a portrait. The figure is further secured at the base of the canvas, across which Klimt painted three zigzagging horizontal blue lines.

The model and the interior appear in a flat, shadowless light that dissipates form and accentuates the broad patterns Klimt preferred. The palette is high-key, comprising pinks, violets and creamy colors, against which are placed floral accents. Work was likely done over many sessions, with the artist painting directly, sometimes over previous dried passages. This can be observed at the neck, where Klimt painted strands of hair by dragging a brush loaded with brown pigment over already completed skin and fabric.

Mäda recalled that Klimt made as many as 200 sketches of her in different poses. This indicates an enormous amount of preparation to find the right design. Both the room and the pose were products of the artist's invention. The dress and its floral decorations—repeated on the wall and floor—were designed by Klimt's companion, Emilie Flöge.


GUSTAV
KLIMT

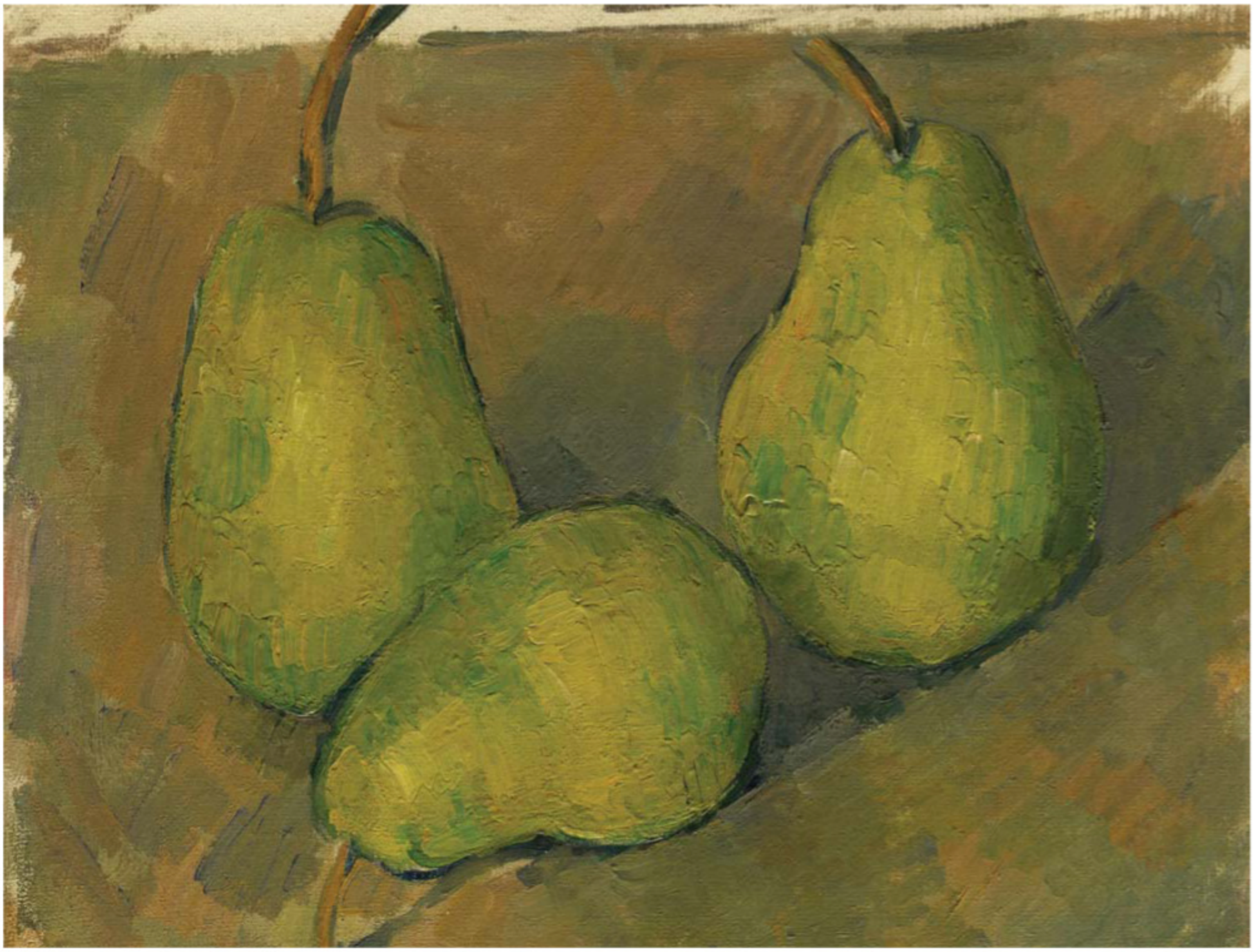


IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. PAUL MELLON, 2006.128.14

The Power of Limits

A small grouping of fruit supplies plenty of opportunity for exploration, as Cezanne shows us in his texture-rich still life, **Three Pears** (1878-9; oil on canvas, 7⅞ x 10⅛).

Channel your efforts—and strengthen your impact.

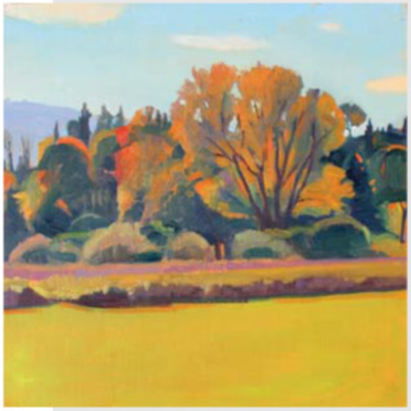
By Susan Abbott

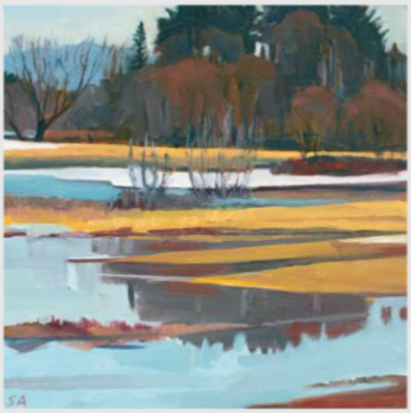
Fresh out of art school, I was on the hunt for a gallery. I put together a portfolio showing everything I could do as a young painter: expressive charcoal figure drawings, loose plein air oil landscapes, detailed watercolor still lifes. I thought gallery owners would be impressed by my wide range of styles and subjects. After all, my mom was!

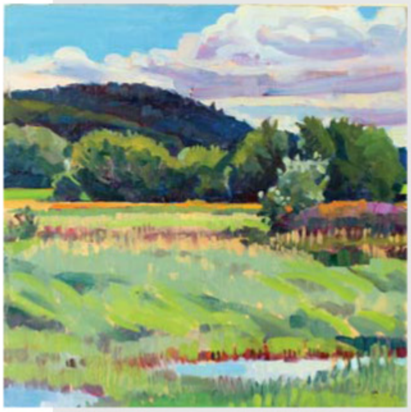
Instead of praise, however, I was met with puzzled looks. “What are you trying to say with your work?” the dealers asked. “What, exactly, is it that you do?” I retreated to my studio to think about my answers, and decades later, I’m still figuring this out. For an artist, there are no more difficult questions, and each of us must find our own response.

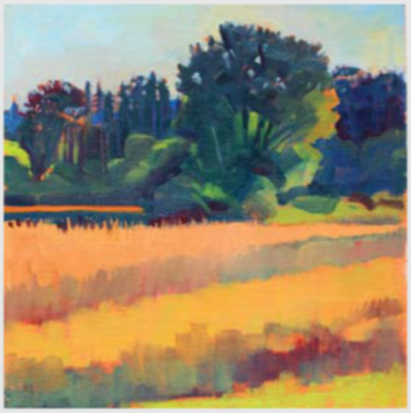
The minimalist master Agnes Martin (American, 1912–2004) searched until she came upon a visual idea that felt like hers alone to explore. In describing her breakthrough moment, she said, “Then a grid came into my mind ... and so I painted it and then I was satisfied. I thought, *This is my vision*.” Hundreds of beautiful grids later, we can see the prolific fruit born of that very specific idea.

CHALLENGE 1: LIMIT YOUR SUBJECT









Pick a subject that interests you and then narrow that choice further. Rather than thinking, *I'll paint plein air landscapes*, think, *For the next few months, I'll paint plein air landscapes at the same place and the same time of day*. For my series shown here, I did just that, returning every week to a nearby farm with 12x12 panels for an afternoon of oil painting. By the end of the year, I felt my ability to observe color in the landscape had greatly improved. By adding the further limitations of medium and canvas size, I had fewer decisions to make, and I created a visually unified series.

LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM
Silver Maple and Hay Field
(oil on panel, 12x12)

Marsh Grass, Sunny Day
(oil on panel, 12x12)

RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM
Snow Melt in Hay Field
(oil on panel, 12x12)

Maple and Wetlands, Late Afternoon
(oil on panel, 12x12)

CULTIVATION OF LIMITS

The public often has the impression that making art is about freedom, but from an artist's perspective, the work is more about narrowing possibilities than about having endless choices. Beginners experiment enthusiastically with many media and techniques, and they happily try out the wildly diverse styles of their teachers. Later, as they move on from instruction and begin the journey to becoming independent artists, they must figure out what they want to say and how to say it.

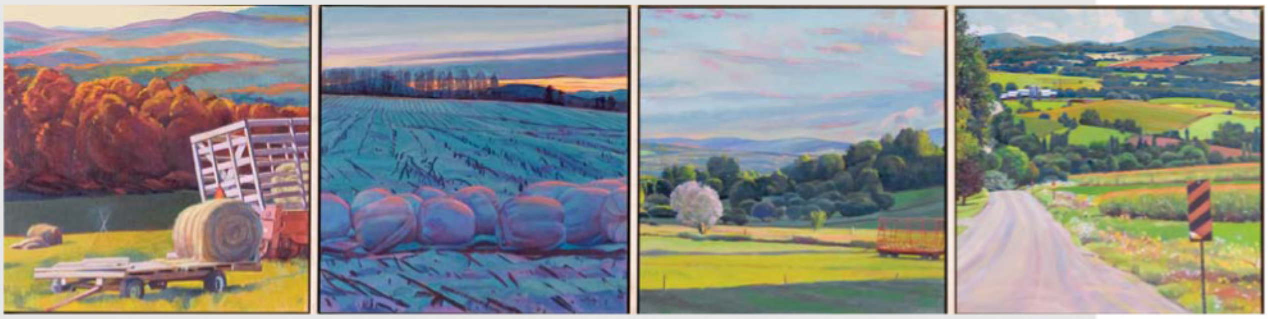
Defining the limits of our creative practice takes more time than making a few quick decisions. It's an organic process that begins as we seed ideas, weed out the unworkable, and then winnow the endless possibilities that art presents to us. We achieve strong technique in a medium or two, develop a recognizable style and explore deeply personal subjects. As we do these things, we grow our limits, choice by choice, painting by painting.

When we reach our goal of building a professional life, our name becomes associated with our imagery. We are "Jane Doe, who makes colorful acrylic abstractions" or "John Smith, the photorealist watercolor landscape painter." We continue down these chosen paths until it feels as if our creativity is stifled by the rules we've created for ourselves. Then it's time to start experimenting again.

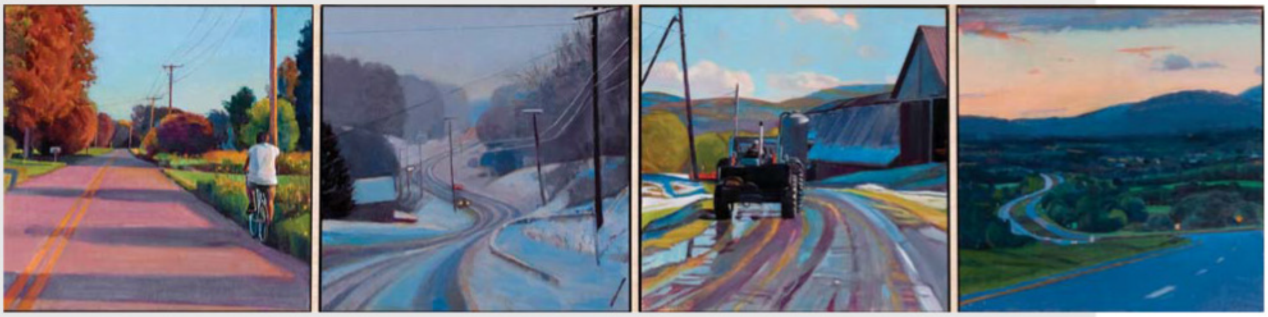
CHALLENGE 2: LIMIT MEDIUM AND SIZE

Create a series that limits the paper, panel or canvas you use to the same size and shape. Explore how this format (square, rectangle, diptych—or even circle) influences the way you design your painting. Investigate how other artists have used this format and what you can learn from their design choices.

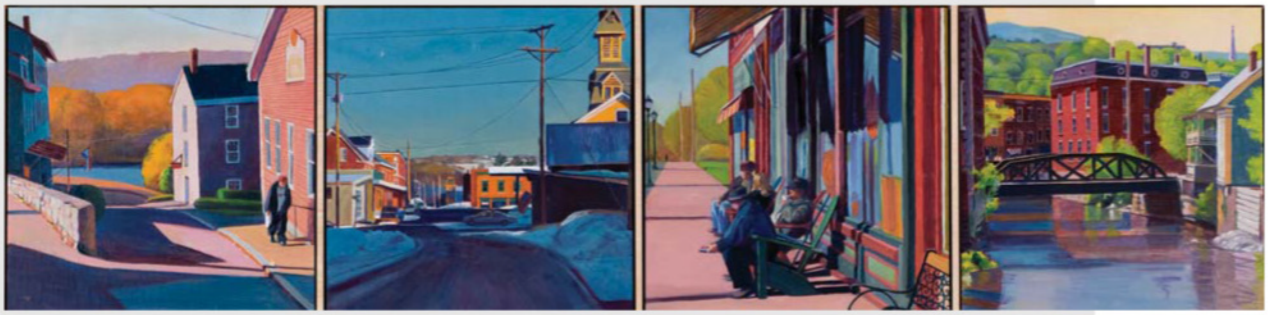
In this series of oils, for example, I explored the possibilities of creating narratives about landscapes with a polyptych (multi-panel) format. Each four-panel set addresses a different landscape element—adding another layer of limitation.



Elements of Landscape: Fields (oil on four panels, 12x12 each)



Elements of Landscape: Roads (oil on four panels, 12x12 each)



Elements of Landscape: Towns (oil on four panels, 12x12 each)

FOCUSED EXPLORATIONS

If limits can sometimes inhibit us as artists, why do they also help us? One reason is that when we have no limits on the way we work, expertise becomes difficult. Developing the skills we need to state our vision takes time and repetition. With 10,000 hours of practice under our belts, we can achieve proficiency in a few media—in pastel and oil, for example, or in printmaking and watercolor. But to achieve expertise in four or five media? That's a daunting challenge.

Too many ways of seeing can also slow down our efforts to develop an individual vision. We live in a time when the internet and print media give us access to the entire history of art, as well as to an enormous quantity of contemporary artwork. It's easy to be influenced by the thousands of images that flash by as we scroll Facebook and Instagram posts and browse YouTube videos. Amid all this noise, how does an artist find an separate, identifiable voice?

A good starting point is to set guidelines for your work, rather than looking for too much guidance from others. This might mean committing to exploring just one small corner of your own wide interests. Let's say, for example, you want to paint still lifes. Narrow down that idea even further and try a series using the same medium, the same canvas size or the same few props. Experiment with different compositions within these limits and see how far and in what direction this one path can lead you.

DISTINCTIVE CREATIONS

It seems paradoxical that our powers as artists grow from the very limits we impose on ourselves, but consider this thought experiment: Imagine a painting by van Gogh. Chances are that you can immediately envision his colorful, textured, bold artwork in your mind's eye. Now, imagine putting the work of another painter—say, Degas—beside that of van Gogh. You immediately sense how different Degas' painting, with its subtle colors, smooth brushwork and urbane Parisian figures, is from van Gogh's Provençal sunflowers. Both began with paint and canvas, so how did they end up in such different places?

The answer is that they each, over time, limited their subjects, colors, brushwork and composition. They experimented, but within boundaries they set for themselves. Narrowing their choices allowed these artists to create painting after painting that expresses a unique vision and authentic voice.

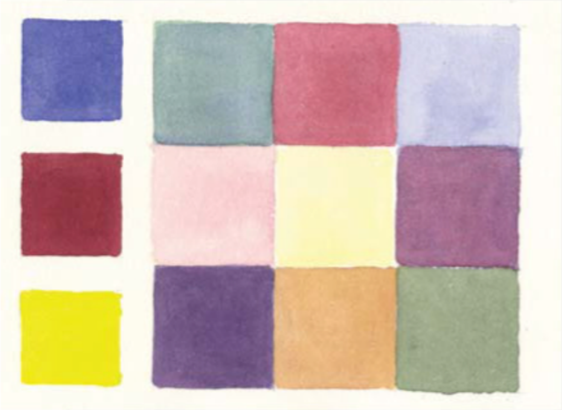
So, if you're struggling with uncertainty in your work, try giving up the idea of infinite possibilities and instead dive deeper into a few of your most exciting ideas. To get started, try one or more of the challenges presented here. You may find new creative freedom when you discover the power of limits.

Susan B. Abbott earned an MFA from the Maryland Institute, College of Art, and exhibits her paintings widely in galleries and museums. To see more of her work plus her class schedule, visit susanabbott.com. Follow her on Instagram @susanabbott_art.

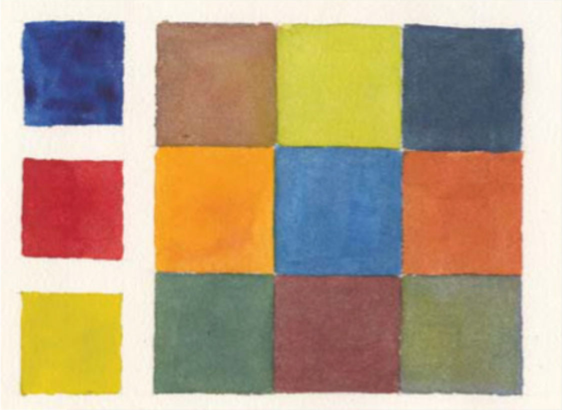
CHALLENGE 3: LIMIT YOUR COLOR PALETTE

Working with the same three pigments for a series of paintings is an effective way to develop a more individual color approach. Pick just three primary colors, for example, and do a series of paintings that explore the wide range of color compositions available from a triad.

Here are two options you can try. The cool-triad colors are based on lemon yellow, alizarin crimson and ultramarine blue. The warm-triad colors are based on cadmium yellow pale, cadmium red and Prussian blue.



Cool Triad and Mixtures



Warm Triad and Mixtures

A Match Made in Heaven

Live-event artist Stephanie Struth says "I Do" to wedding painting.

BY Amy Leibrock

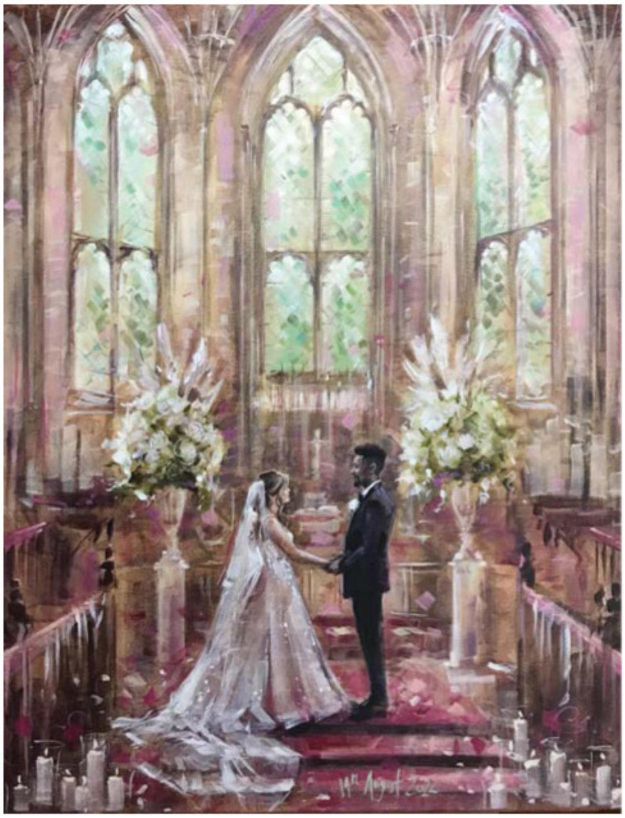
ABOVE
During the wedding ceremony, such as this one at **Syon House Great Conservatory, in London,** Struth can concentrate on the trickier parts of the painting without distractions from the wedding party or guests.

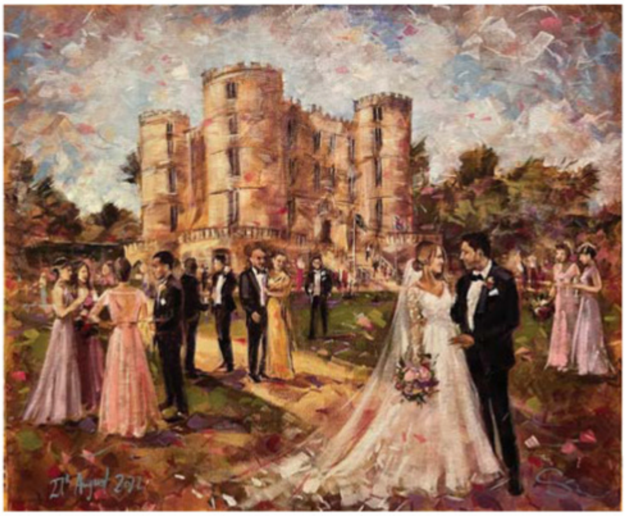
ED PEREIRA PHOTOGRAPHY

Stephanie Struth enjoys painting live scenes and portraits, and she's comfortable working in front of an audience. With these skills in her toolbox, she's a natural for creating wedding paintings from life. "Many people spend a lot of money on a wedding and often have little left to show for it," says Struth, a wedding artist in Essex, England. "Live painting is a genuinely fascinating feature that wedding guests love, and it gives the couple a precious souvenir of their day, created on that day."

Five years ago, wedding publications such as *Brides* and *The Knot* magazines declared live wedding painting a growing trend—and their prediction has held true. In this digital age of photography and video, some couples are also investing in a physical, one-of-a-kind painting that they can enjoy and pass down as a family heirloom. Having a working artist at a wedding also provides entertainment for guests as they watch a painting come to life over the course of the event.

Before Struth started her business, she had experience drawing portraits on site at other live events, such as street markets, as well as painting large murals in public places. "When I saw a film online of an artist painting live at a wedding, I knew that would be something I could do," she says, but she adds a caution: "Painting weddings and events isn't for people who don't want to chat. You must have a positive attitude. You genuinely need to enjoy the experience. The challenges should help improve your work rather than compromise it."





TOP LEFT
Wedding at Ashridge House, Hertfordshire, U.K.

TOP RIGHT
Wedding at Lulworth Castle, Dorset, U.K.

LEFT
Struth presents her painting, **Wedding at the Roman Baths, Bath, U.K.**

PRASH PHOTOGRAPHY

BEFORE THE EVENT

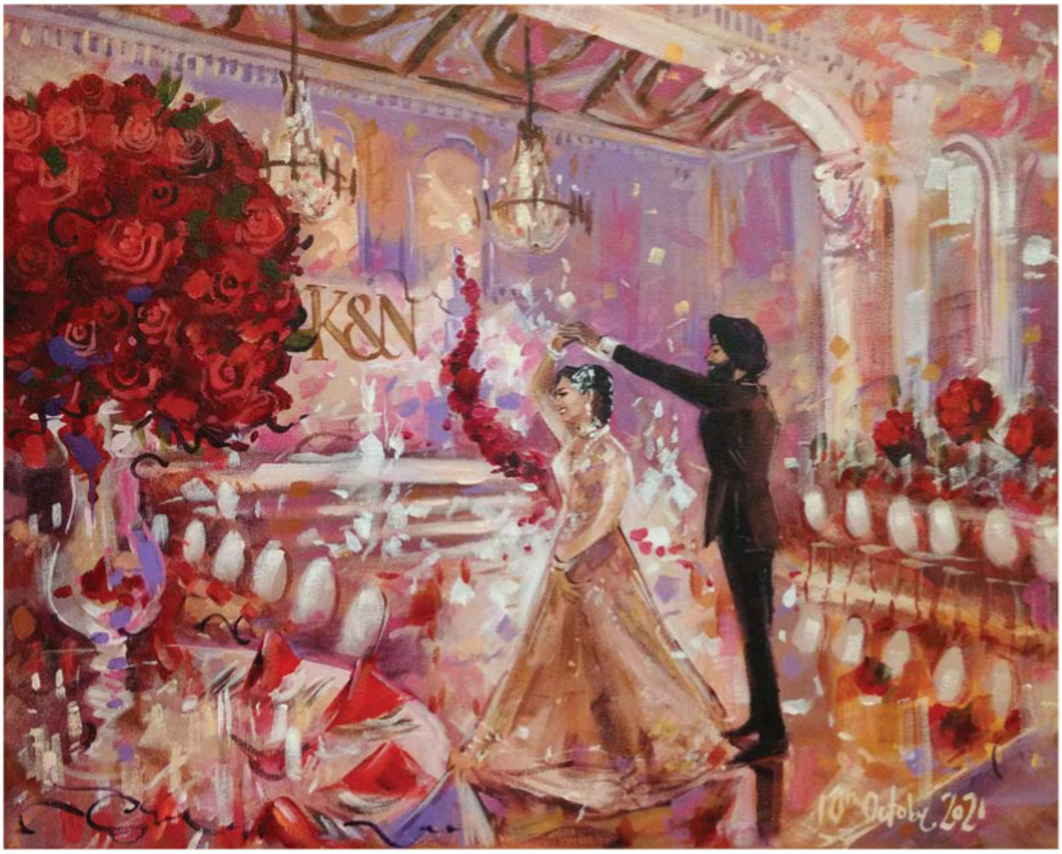
When working with wedding clients, Struth keeps in mind that they may not have experience in commissioning work from an artist and they may not be familiar with art terms and techniques. "Some people find it difficult to know or explain what they want, so having clear packages to offer and examples of my work makes it easier for clients to figure out their preferences and explain them to me," says Struth. Her packages differ according to canvas size and the number of guests. Clients choose the scene or moment they want captured, and Struth has input on which venue and decor features to include. "I want clients to tell me what they dislike as well as what they like, so I can create a painting that they'll love," she says.

In a face-to-face meeting or through digital communication, Struth settles on a vision for the painting and works out details, such as where she'll set up. She sets clear and realistic expectations by asking clients to sign off on a set of terms and conditions. These include copyright and use-of-image issues, the scope of the work commissioned and payments. She also includes a *force majeure* clause, which protects her and her client from liabilities for acts, events or circumstances out of either party's control, such as a tornado or hurricane. Health and safety considerations are also specified. "I want the client to know that if I feel I'm set up in a location that's unsafe for me or guests, I'll pack up and finish the painting in the studio," says Struth. This puts clients on notice that they should ensure there's a safe and convenient place for the artist to work.

DAY OF THE EVENT

Struth paints in acrylic and brings a canvas, a French easel, paint, brushes and a palette to the wedding venue. She also carries a case with a daylight lamp, a camera and SD card reader, chargers, a drop cloth and sketch paper. She set up in an area with ample space and draws or blocks in the composition before guests arrive so she can paint throughout the event. "I try to do the parts that require concentration while guests are seated for the ceremony or reception," she says. "Then I do less challenging bits while they're coming to chat with me as they watch me paint."

Most of Struth's paintings are finished on site, but some wedding artists prefer to finish in the studio, and they may use reference photos to refine faces and details.



LEFT
Wedding at The Grand Connaught Rooms, London

BELOW
The artist presents **Wedding at Newland Manor, London**

PRASH PHOTOGRAPHY

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Pricing for live wedding painting varies among artists and depends on many factors: region, demand and the artist's experience level and portfolio. "Every painter is different," says Struth, "so I think the key is finding your place in the market. How many hours do you want to work or how far will you travel for a job? These are points to consider when working out a pricing structure."

When Struth started painting weddings in 2016, she created a website, and people who'd heard of live painting found her online. She kept her fees relatively low as she built a portfolio. As time went by, she acquired new clients by word of mouth, and her business has grown every year.

"People are always photographing me at events and sharing those pictures on Instagram or with WhatsApp groups. This, and word of mouth, is my main source of new bookings," says Struth. She also credits other wedding artists with high profiles, such as Maggie Smith Kuhn and Stephanie Torregrossa, for bringing more attention to live painting and creating demand.

"Weddings are amazing," says Struth. "You often see people at their absolute best, and it restores your faith in humanity. What's more, by attending these celebrations as an artist, I get to spend my days painting, which is just what I want to do."

Amy Leibrock is a Cincinnati-based writer and content manager.

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~Kathi Hanson, Artist & Artist Educator

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Jade, 28" x 16" (detail)
Tanja Gant, CPSA, CPX (Texas)
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WE ASKED...

What has been a difficult art habit to break?

WE ASKED...
YOU ANSWERED

"Breaking the need to paint inside the lines. As someone who's continually working toward a looser way of painting, I've made it a personal goal to create more lost edges in my work. Sometimes it helps to make a conscious decision about the direction you want your painting to take. Practice then leads to new habits."

JULIE GILBERT POLLARD
ARTIST

"One habit I fight is the desire to reveal too much in my work—too much detail or too much of the story. I've learned that not everything needs to be stated. Mystery is equally as important as anything shown in my work."

JESSE LANE
ARTIST

"Trying to do everything myself. As an artist, you're a one-man band, and it's easy to assume you have to do everything yourself. At some point that becomes impossible. Giving up control and outsourcing some things, though it was scary, has been one of the best decisions I've made."

JEANNE ROSIER SMITH
ARTIST

"Breaking the nearly constant negative self-talk, telling myself it's not good enough and I'm not a good enough painter and I'll never figure this painting out. I try to find ways to change that negative self-talk into a strategy for how to make a painting better."

KRISTY GORDAN
ARTIST

"Not finishing. Many times, if I get interrupted while painting, I lose the flow and can't seem to get it back."
—PATSY HELLER

"Not starting. It sounds small, but it's giant. One needs to take the first step—to change the inertia from being at rest to being in motion."
—MARTIN MCCUE

"It's hard to make myself slow down—to really *look* when I draw."
—CLYTIE RIMBURG

"Not doing preliminary studies before starting a painting."
—DORIS KING

"Procrastination."
—MANY, MANY PEOPLE

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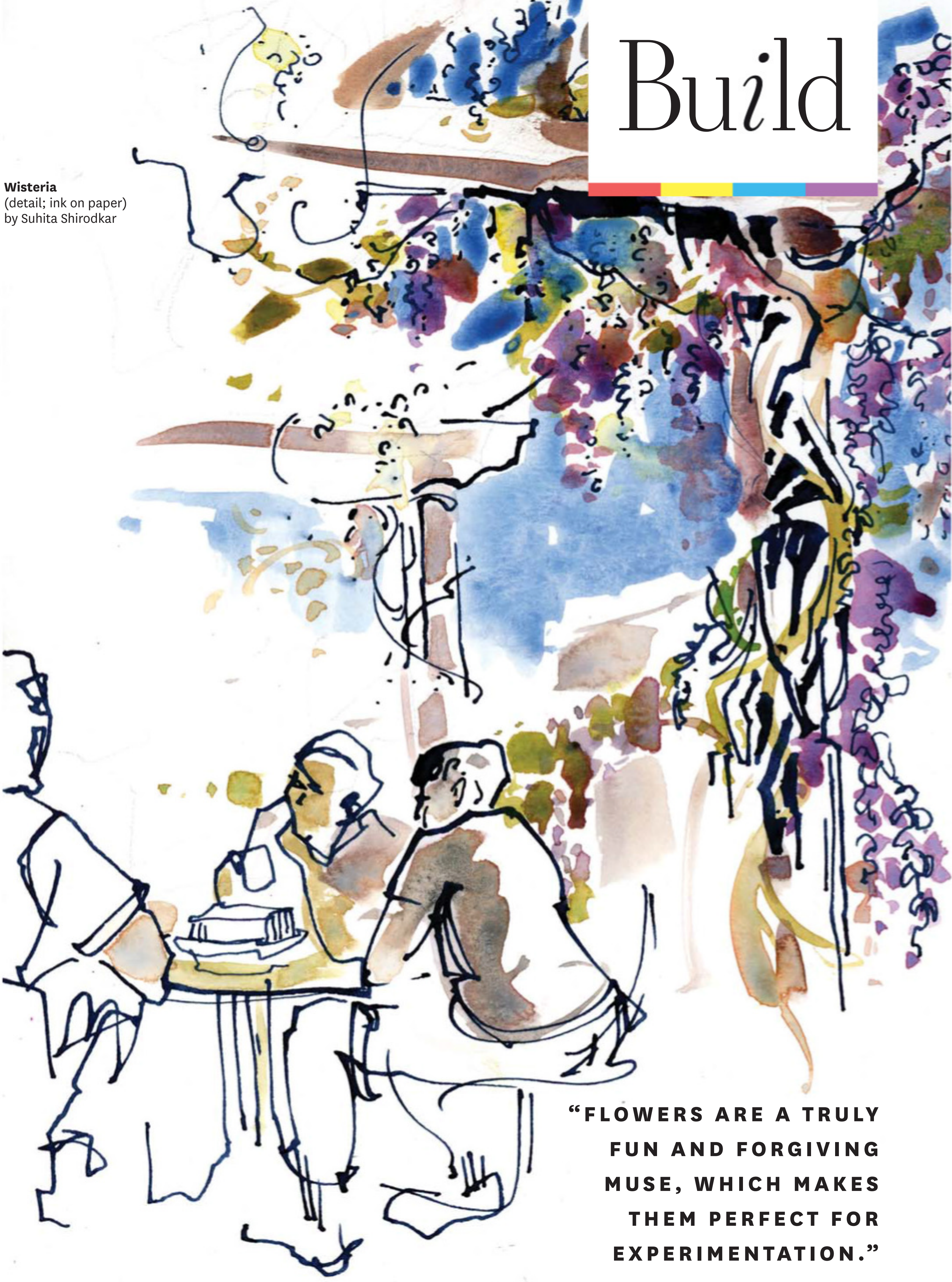
Build



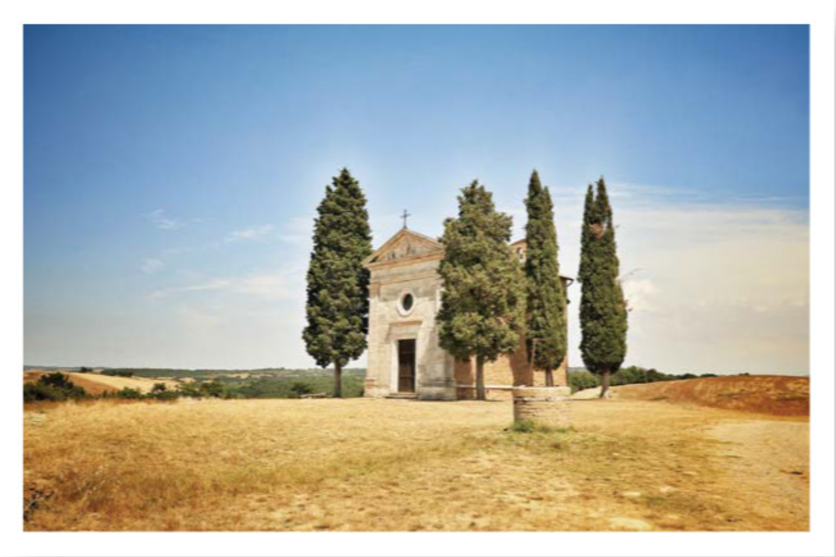
Wisteria
(detail; ink on paper)
by Suhita Shirodkar

> "FLOWERS ARE A TRULY FUN AND FORGIVING MUSE, WHICH MAKES THEM PERFECT FOR EXPERIMENTATION."
>
> —SUHITA SHIRODKAR

WATER SOLUBLES

Follow along with **SCOTT MAIER** as he experiments with water-soluble graphite.

Experimenting with new materials is a great way to reveal unexplored possibilities in your work. The whole concept of water-soluble drawing materials excites me. Although I've worked with Graphitint pencils before, it has been a challenge to embrace them fully because I've developed a reliance on more traditional materials that I know will deliver the results I want. The following demonstration helped me gain a better understanding of these unique pencils—and the color possibilities they provide.



Reference Photo

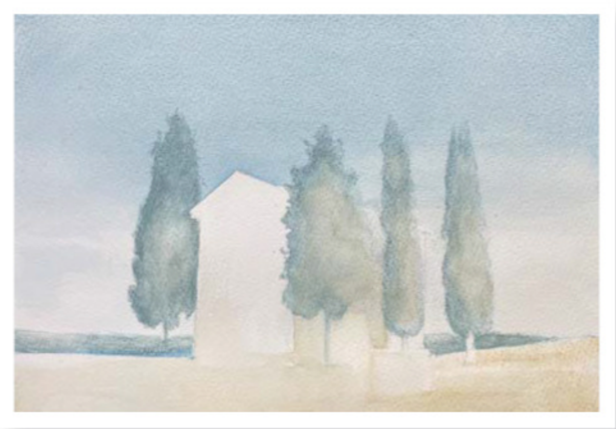
PHOTO BY KRISTOF VAN RENTERGEM ON UNSPLASH

MATERIALS

Graphite: Derwent's Graphitint water-soluble, tinted graphite pencils
Watercolor brushes: Kolinsky sables in various sizes
Surface: 9x12-inch cold-pressed watercolor paper

DEMONSTRATION: DRAWING WITH GRAPHITINT

STEP 1: INITIAL WASH



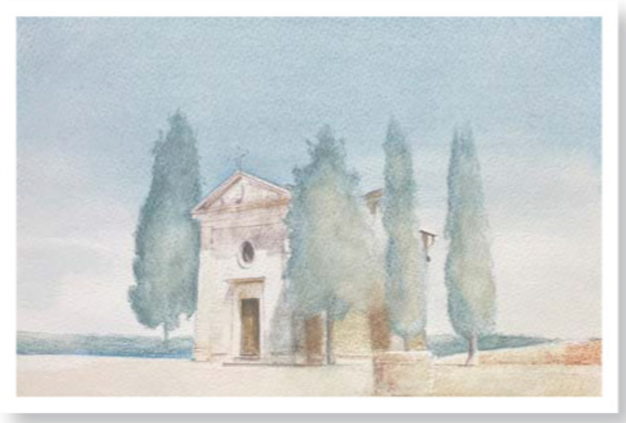
I made light outlines of the primary shapes and used ocean blue to lightly layer the sky. Then I washed the area with a No. 14 brush loaded with water. Once it was dry, I used slate green to block in the distant hills and trees, followed by sage in the foreground and the shadow area of the church.

Activating the dry color requires a fair amount of water. The color can also set quickly, leaving visible brush marks. Keeping the brush fully loaded with water helps in achieving a smooth gradation in the sky.

STEP 2: REFINE

I focused on defining the perspective, placing the door and window and blocking in the areas of light and shadow. For this stage, I used three colors: white, mountain gray and warm gray.

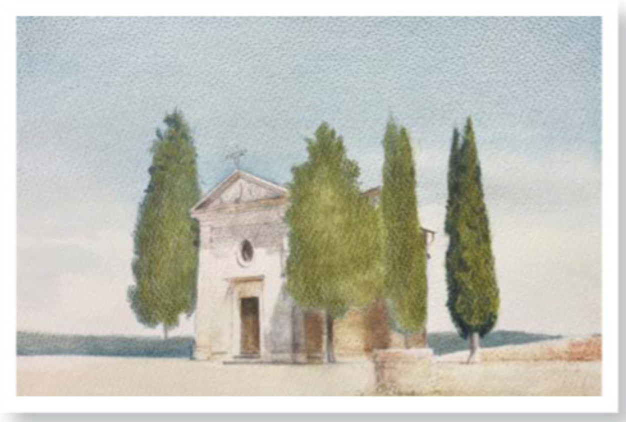
These pencils make fine, precise lines, but they can be affected by the tooth and dampness of the paper. If the paper is overly saturated, drawing on the surface can be a challenge. Once dry, the tooth of the paper can create a textured, drybrush effect. When the paper is slightly damp, the pencil will leave sharp and delicate lines.



STEP 3: MID-TONES

I started building the value contrast and enriching the colors by adding a layer of dry pencil to the sky with ocean blue and slate green. Next, I focused on a mid-tone for the trees, which I then darkened using the colors ivy and shadow.

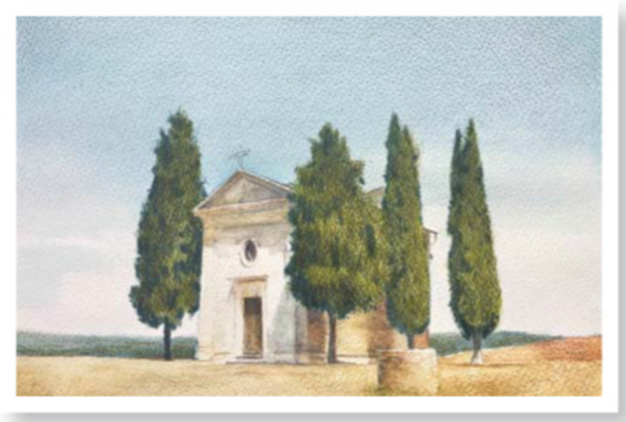
A slightly damp brush works well to suggest texture in the trees. When wet, the colors in these pencils get richer, but it can be a delicate balance to effectively load the brush with water. Large areas, like the sky, are best served by using more water, while textured areas are best achieved by using less.



STEP 4: FINAL TOUCHES

I darkened the shadows in the trees and added colors and textures to the foreground. Then I used a dry application of the shadow color to add more form and texture to the trees. Three colors were used in the foreground—sage, russet and cocoa—along with loose brushwork and a mixture of drybrush and wetbrush techniques.

Using a gentle touch to activate a dry layer with a wet brush allows the tooth of the paper to remain visible. This helps to avoid overworking the foreground and suggest, rather than describe, the texture.



Scott Maier is an artist, video producer and content creator for artistsnetwork.com, where he hosted the show Drawing Together. *He's also the author of the instructional art book,* See, Think, Draw.

MORE ONLINE!

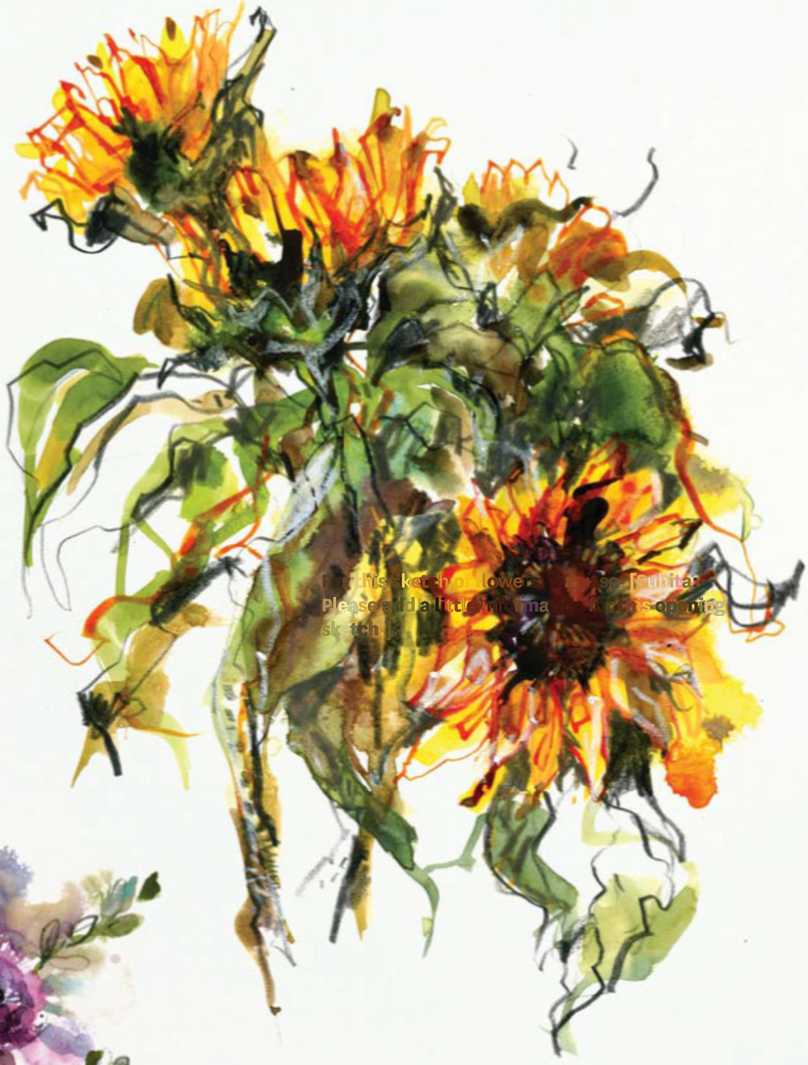
To see an extended demonstration, with additional photos, visit artistsnetwork.com/art-mediums/drawing/work-in-progress-wednesday-drawing-with-graphitint.

Flowers With a Twist

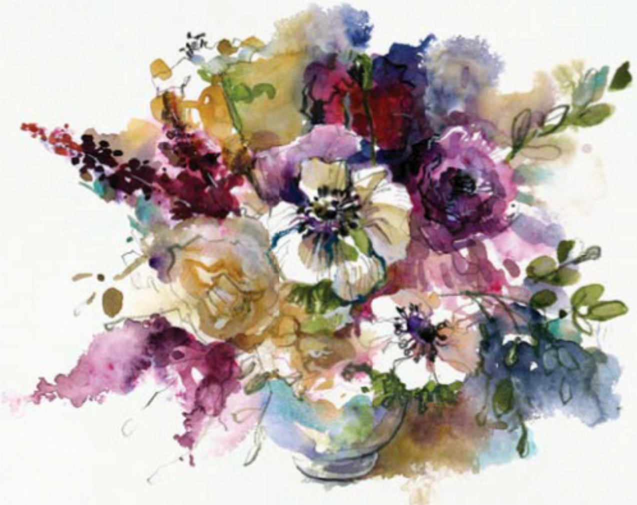
Inject some fresh excitement into your floral sketches with **SUHITA SHIRODKAR**'s fun ideas for capturing this endlessly captivating subject.

Who doesn't love to paint flowers? While a vase of blooms is a gorgeous subject, floral sketches can go far beyond still lifes and bouquets. Your depictions of flowers can take the form of botanical studies or become a record of the seasons. They might take on a starring role in your urban sketches or offer the perfect incentive for trying out some experimental techniques. The possibilities are endless!

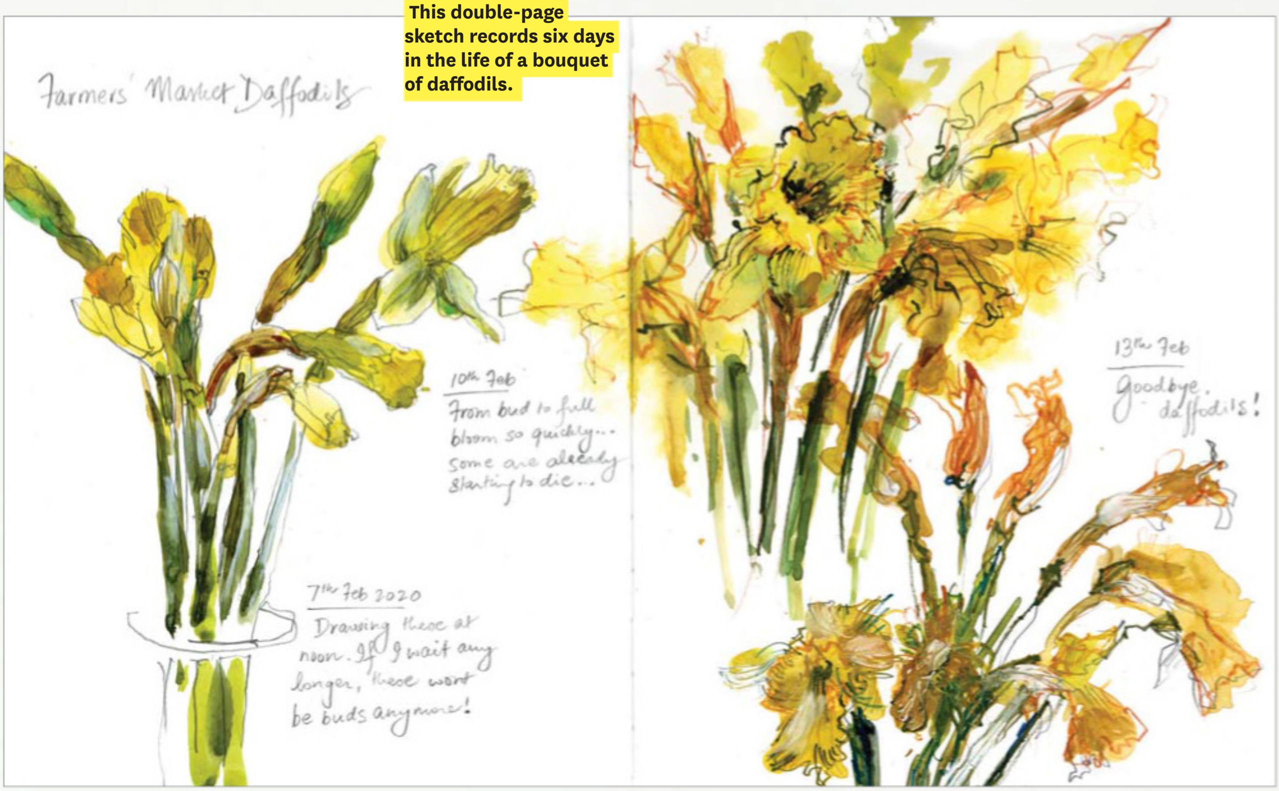
Wherever they're found—in a vase or bouquet, a formal public garden or backyard—flowers offer enough variation as a subject to keep creativity humming happily for ages.



For this sketch of flowers in a vase, [Suhita: Please add a little information for this opening sketch.].



This double-page sketch records six days in the life of a bouquet of daffodils.



Farmers' Market Daffodils

10th Feb
From bud to full bloom so quickly... Some are already starting to die...

7th Feb 2020
Drawing these at noon. If I wait any longer, these won't be buds anymore!

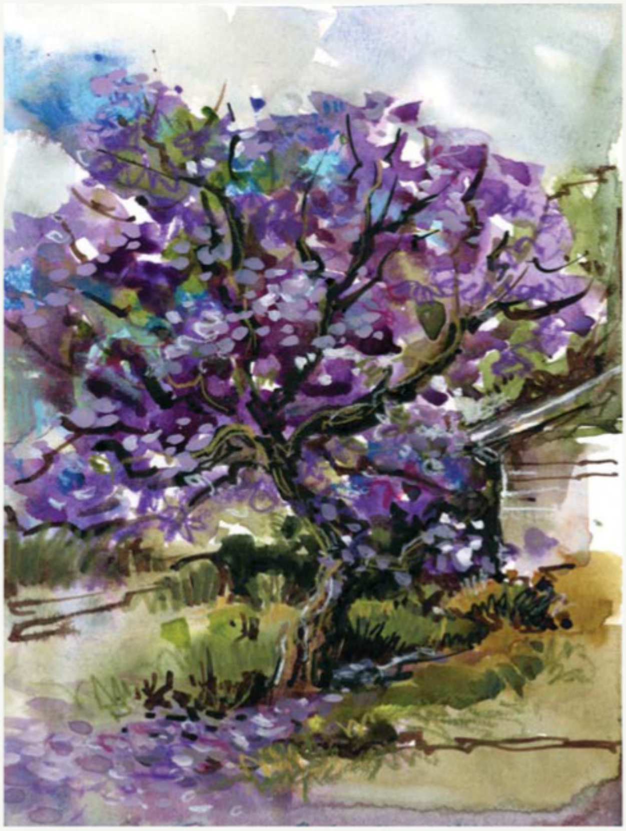
13th Feb
Goodbye daffodils!

CAPTURE A LIFE CYCLE

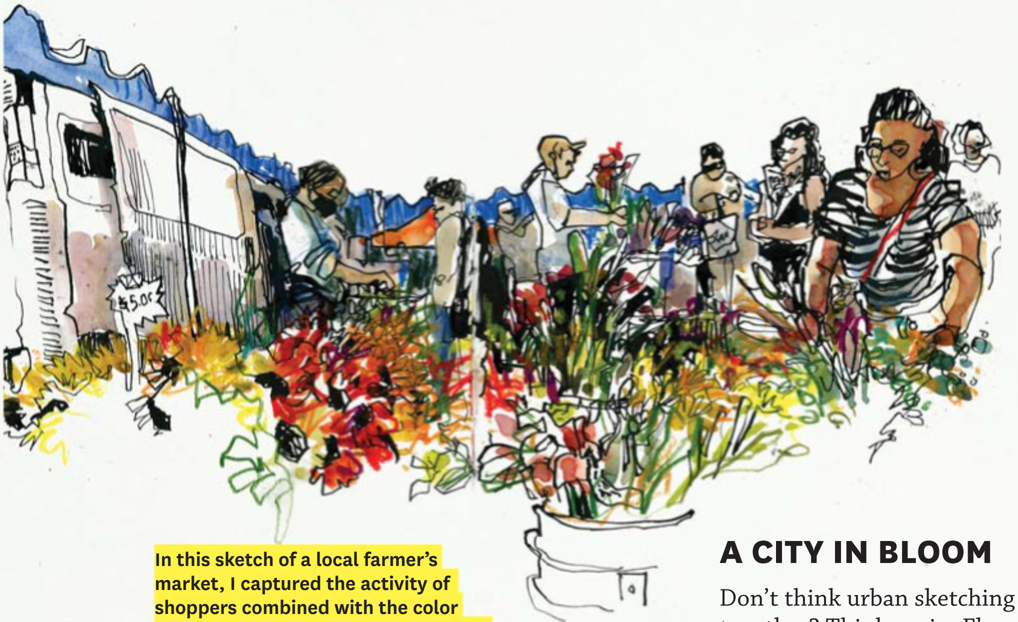
Instead of capturing flowers only at the height of their bloom, record a flower throughout various stages. Challenge yourself to capture a range of textures in the process—from the soft, fuzzy feel of new growth to the crumpled, translucent petals of withered blooms.

A RECORD OF YOUR EVER-CHANGING SURROUNDINGS

Paint the flowering trees and plants in your neighborhood to capture the ever-changing world around you. When that nondescript tree suddenly bursts into bloom, be there with your sketchbook to record its new, showy avatar. Over time, you'll find yourself becoming more keenly aware of the cycle of subtle changes taking place in the natural world around your own neighborhood.



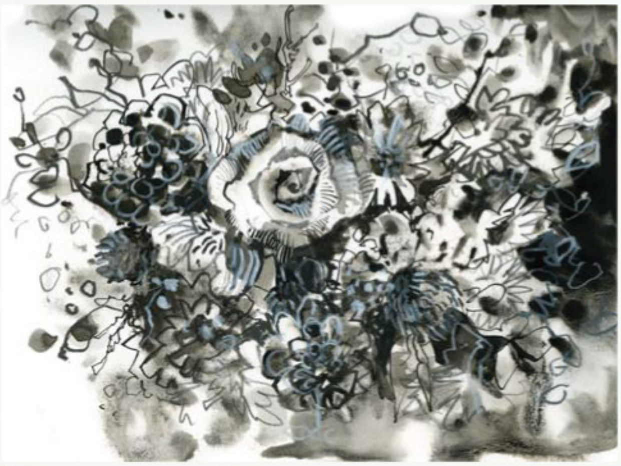
This beautiful jacaranda tree produces clusters of fragrant purple flowers. I was ready with my sketchbook when it burst into bloom.



In this sketch of a local farmer's market, I captured the activity of shoppers combined with the color and beauty of the flowers at the stall.

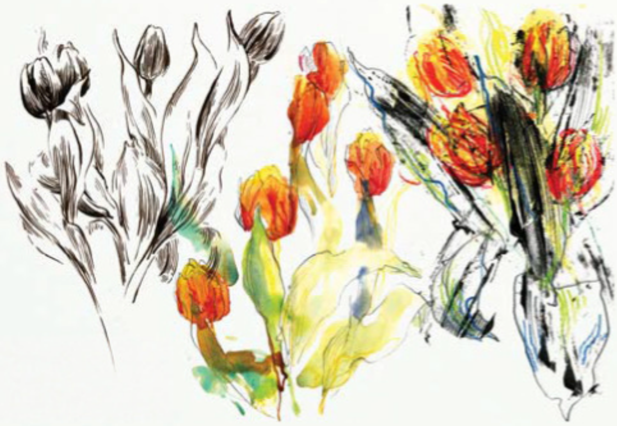
A CITY IN BLOOM

Don't think urban sketching and flowers go together? Think again. Flowers are a much bigger part of urban settings than you might imagine. You can sketch the places that supply flowers—whether it's a neighborhood florist, market stand or the local grocery store—or observe them in a city garden. Add people to your sketch as they stop to smell the roses or pause to enjoy a tree in full bloom.



EXPERIMENT WILDLY

Flowers are a truly fun and forgiving muse, which makes them perfect for experimentation. The next time you sketch them, try using a new medium or technique. If you always use watercolor, try rendering your subject in dry media, or put away your color and surprise yourself by creating floral art in monochrome. You might also want to bring out all those supplies you've been hoarding and try them out in floral sketches.



In the sketch at left, I've experimented with a monochrome approach to a floral bouquet. In the group of sketches above, I captured a small bunch of tulips using a variety of media.

INSPIRING SUBJECT, GUARANTEED

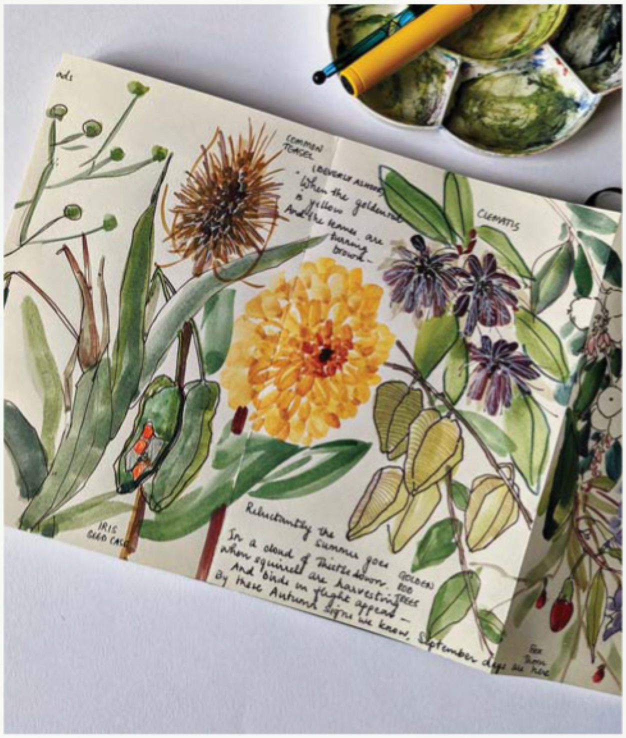
With so many ways to look at flowers—and myriad ways of rendering them—you can be sure this is a subject you can explore in new and different ways every time you crack open your sketchbook.

Suhita Shirodkar (sketchaway.wordpress.com) is a visual journalist and an urban sketcher. She also teaches sketching workshops around the world and online.

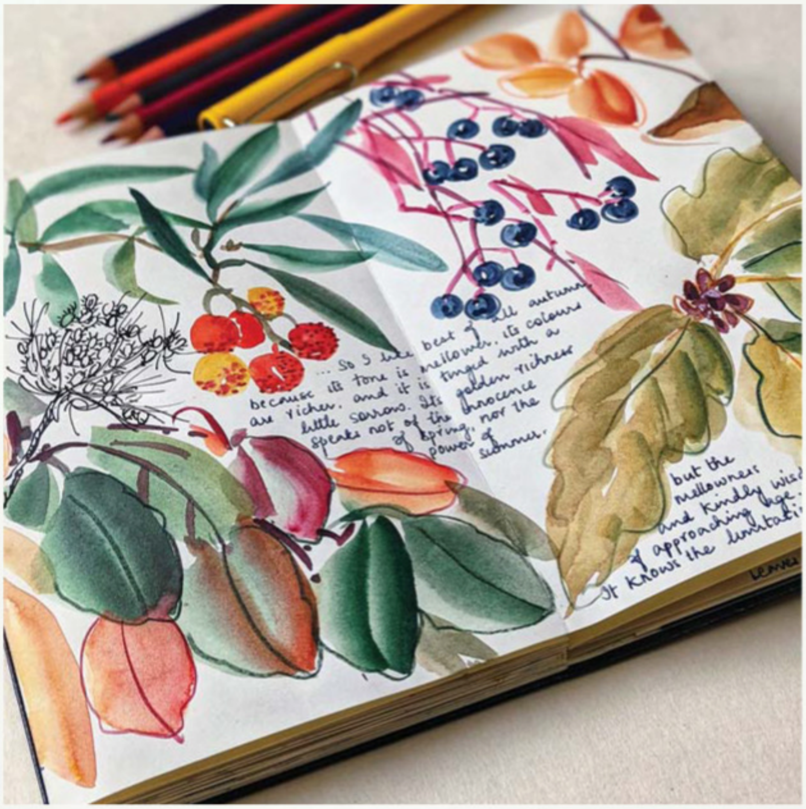
YOU CAN FOLLOW THE ARTIST'S SKETCHBOOK EXPLORATIONS ON INSTAGRAM @SUHITASKETCH.

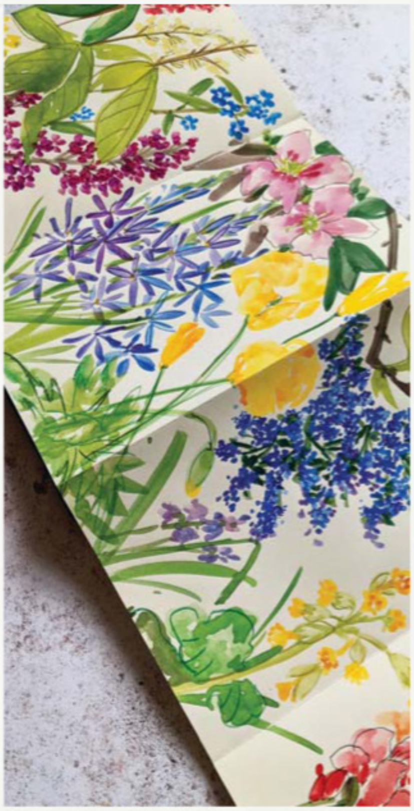
SKETCHBOOK SPOTLIGHT: SHILPA AGASHE

If you looked at Shilpa Agashe's recent sketchbooks, you'd never guess that the artist has always lived in big cities, including New York, Tokyo and London. Her art celebrates nature with such exuberance that you're certain the artist must find her inspiration in the countryside. Currently, Agashe lives in Hampstead, a neighborhood in London. Back when the U.K. government announced another Covid-related lockdown in the city, Agashe knew she'd be taking a lot of neighborhood walks as a way to get out of the house. To channel these explorations into her creative practice, she cooked up an idea—The Hampstead Sketchbook—in which she'd document all of the plant life she encountered on these neighborhood strolls. With camera in hand, the artist roamed Hampstead, taking photos of the flora and fauna that captured her attention. Back home, she used plant identification apps to learn more about what she'd observed. Her study went beyond botanical names, she learned how to tell native plants from non-natives and researched the origins and impact on the local ecosystem. Agashe's project stretched across four different seasons, allowing for a deep dive into her subject. Her self-imposed constraint—to work only in accordion-style sketchbooks, using only ink and watercolor—provided a focus. She included journaling that ranged from plant names to literary quotes and lines of poetry. The artist initially estimated her year-long project would require a couple sketchbooks. By the year's end, she had filled eight.


COMMON TEASEL
CLEMATIS
IRIS
Reluctantly the
Summer goes
In a cloud of Thistledown.
When squirrels are harvesting
And birds in flight appear—
By these Autumn signs we know,
September days are here
GOLDEN ROD TREES

Documenting the flora and fauna of her London neighborhood, artist Shilpa Agasha (@agasheshilpa) filled eight sketchbooks over the course of a year, creating a collection of sketches that celebrate the varying beauty to be found in summer, autumn, winter and spring.


... So I like best of all autumn
because its tone is mellower, its colours
are richer, and it is tinged with a
little sorrow. Its golden richness
speaks not of the innocence
of spring, nor the
power of
summer.
but the
mellowness
and kindly wisdom
of approaching age.
It knows the limitations



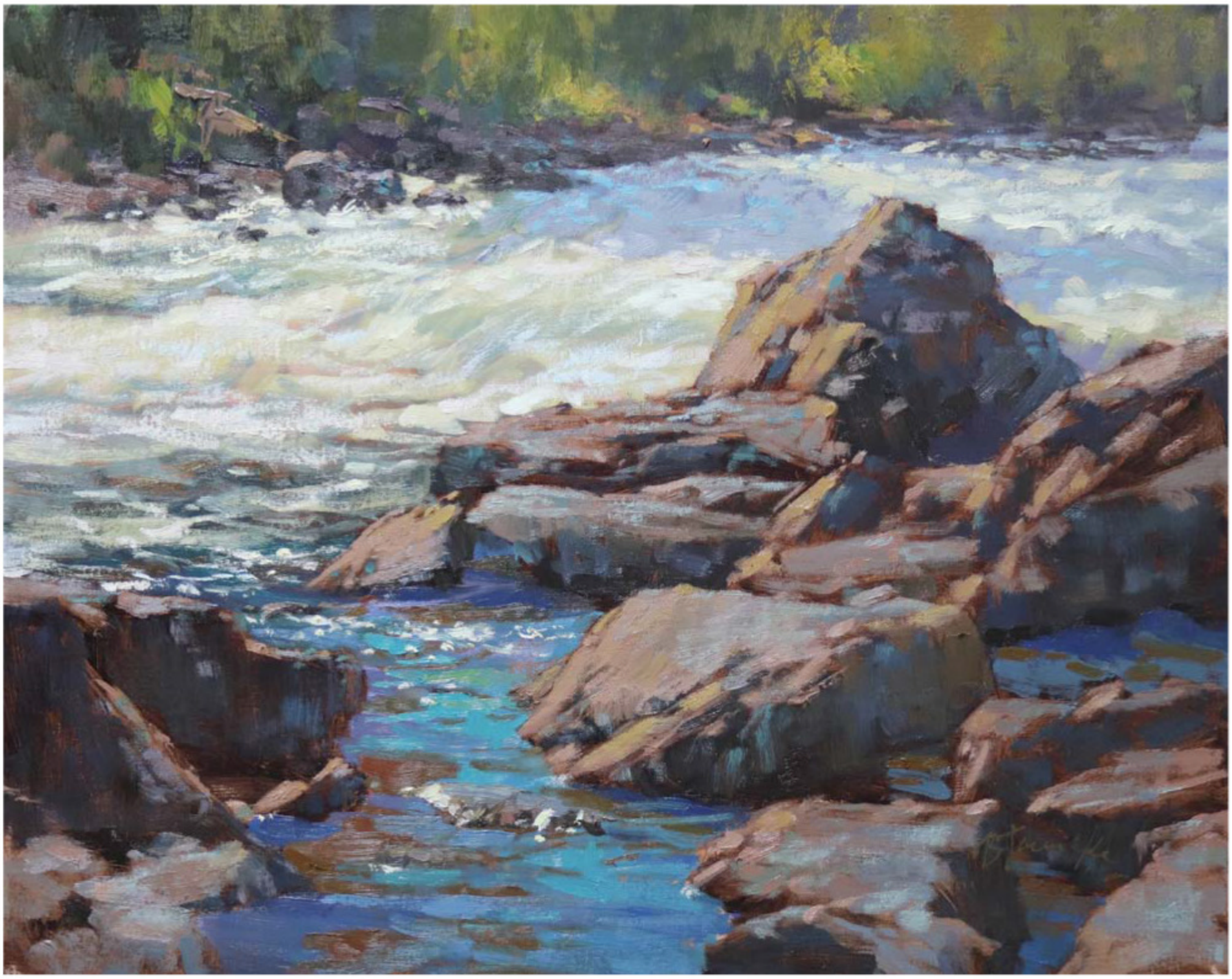
TROUBLESHOOTING

What's Wrong With Your Painting?

By Barbara Jaenicke

Discover the 10 most common pitfalls—and how to avoid them—when painting a landscape.

In my school-age years, I really struggled with math, but I discovered that if I could work out the right questions to ask, I could usually figure out the answers. The same goes for many other challenges—and landscape painting has plenty.



Rocks and Rhythm (oil on canvas, 16x20)

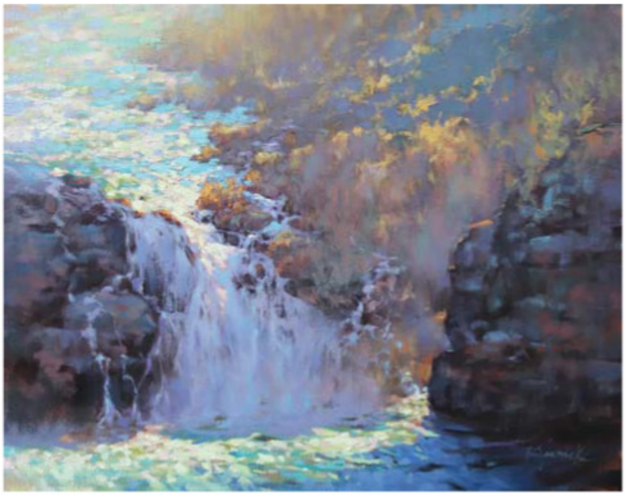
Soliciting critiques from other artists can certainly be a helpful practice, but knowing what to assess in your painting and how to troubleshoot some basic missteps on your own will greatly enhance your efforts. When you develop a habit of self-critiquing your work in this way, fumbles are avoided before they have a chance to rear their ugly heads in front of an audience.

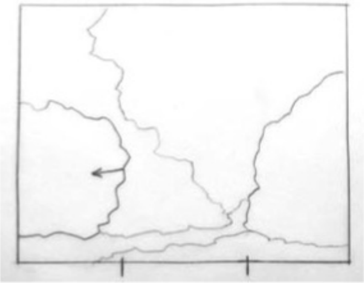
TOP 10 LANDSCAPE PITFALLS

The number of potential problems for landscape artists, especially for the painterly impressionist, surpasses this list, but these are 10 of the most common missteps.

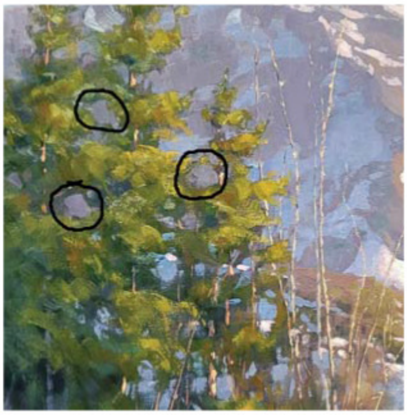
1. **Too much symmetry:** To maintain a strong asymmetrical design, I vary the number of similar elements on each side of the painting. For linear elements, such as tree branches, I aim for a variety of slight angles or curves for each, rather than a repetitive pattern of parallel lines. This is especially important when it comes to distinguishing man-made elements, such as telephone poles, from the natural landscape.

2. **Shapes Lack Variety:** I avoid too many equally sized elements, or unnatural equal spacing between elements, such as "sky holes" in a tree mass. Variety is key.

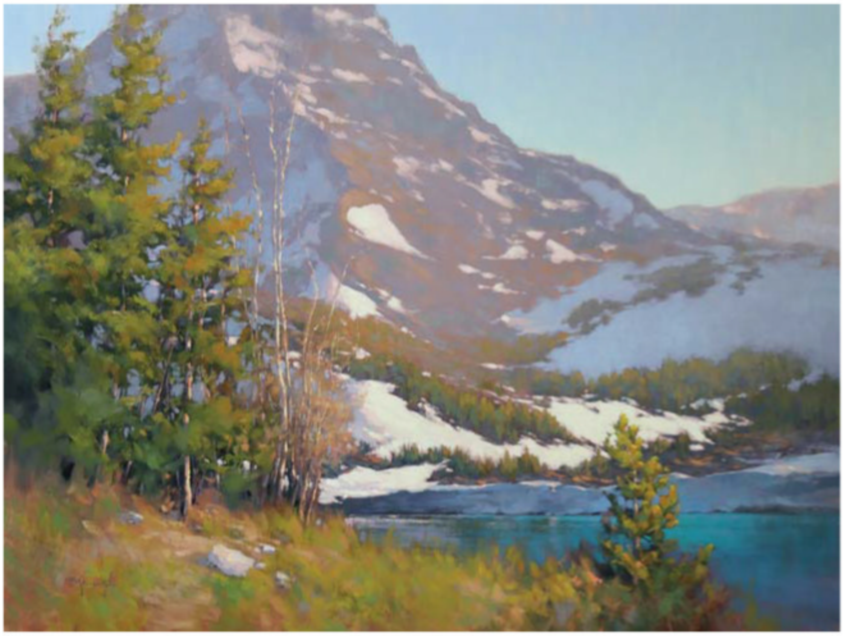




Before **Cascading Rush at Steelhead Falls** (oil on canvas, 16x20) was finished, I noticed that I had "bookends" with the large rock masses on the left and right, as shown in the contour sketch (at left). In the final stages, I extended the waterfall further to the left, which reduced the rock mass on that side and also provided an opportunity for delicate mark-making that added contrast.



The detail (above) shows an earlier version of **Mountainside Iridescence** (oil on canvas, 30x40). The circled areas indicate where the spaces within the tree mass are too similar in size and shape. Notice how I varied them in the final version (right).



3. **Unintentional awkward elements:** When I view a painting in a thumbnail size, awkward shapes or lines will usually jump out at me—problem areas that, up close, aren't as apparent. This often happens when working on two elements next to one another that have space between them, and the space takes on an inadvertent rigid shape or line.

4. **Overly stiff edges:** Edges that I meant to appear vague and loose may actually appear tight and stark when viewed in a thumbnail size. Edges that I want to be loosely defined should appear that way even when viewed at a smaller size.

5. **Stagnant mark-making:** If every stroke of pigment appears as if it has been applied in the same manner, it means that I don't have enough variation in my mark-making. For example, the marks I create for a mass of delicate grasses should differ greatly from those used for the crisp edge of a rock.

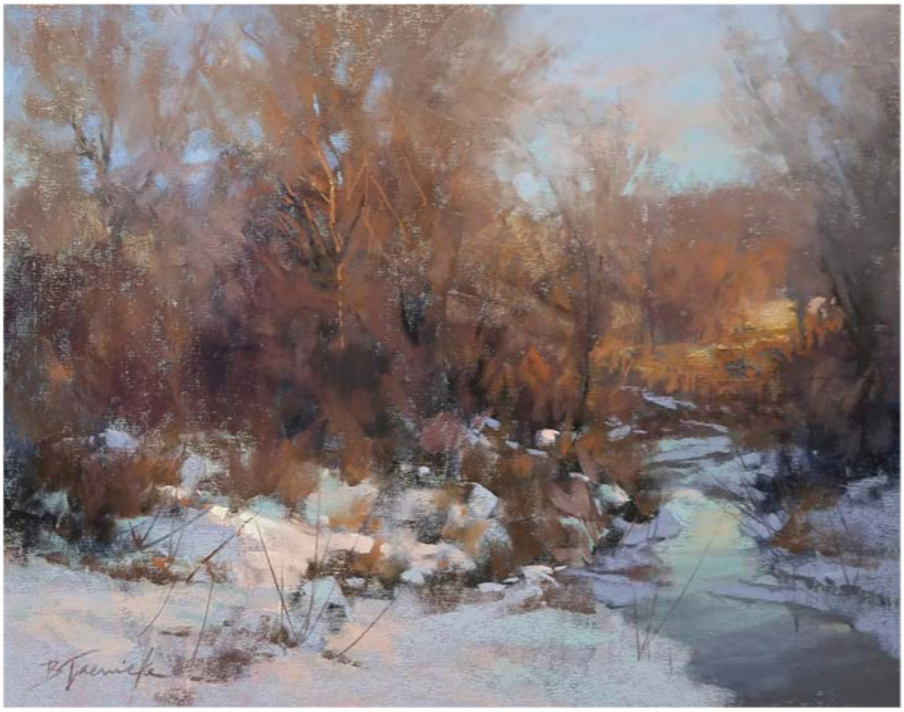
6. **Stuck in the middle:** As I define the subject matter in the later stages, I may inadvertently place noticeable marks in the center of the painting, creating an undesirable bull's-eye. Or, I might lose sight of a horizon line that creeps unwittingly into the middle, cutting the composition in half and diminishing shape variety.

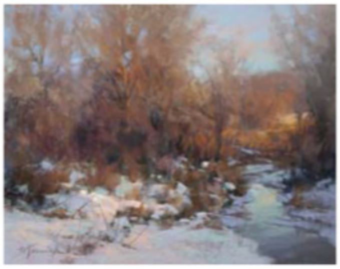
7. **Lacks depth:** If the painting doesn't convey as much depth as it should, it may be that the values in the distance are too dark or overly "contrasty." Or, distant colors may be too vibrant. Another possibility is that too much detail was included in the less important distant areas.

8. **Dull sense of light:** If sunlit areas appear drab and dull, and the painting lacks the genuine capture of light it should have, it could mean that I need to increase the warmth of the color temperature in areas receiving direct sunlight. If shadows appear heavy, this generally means I've painted them too dark, which also compromises my objective of a light-filled landscape.

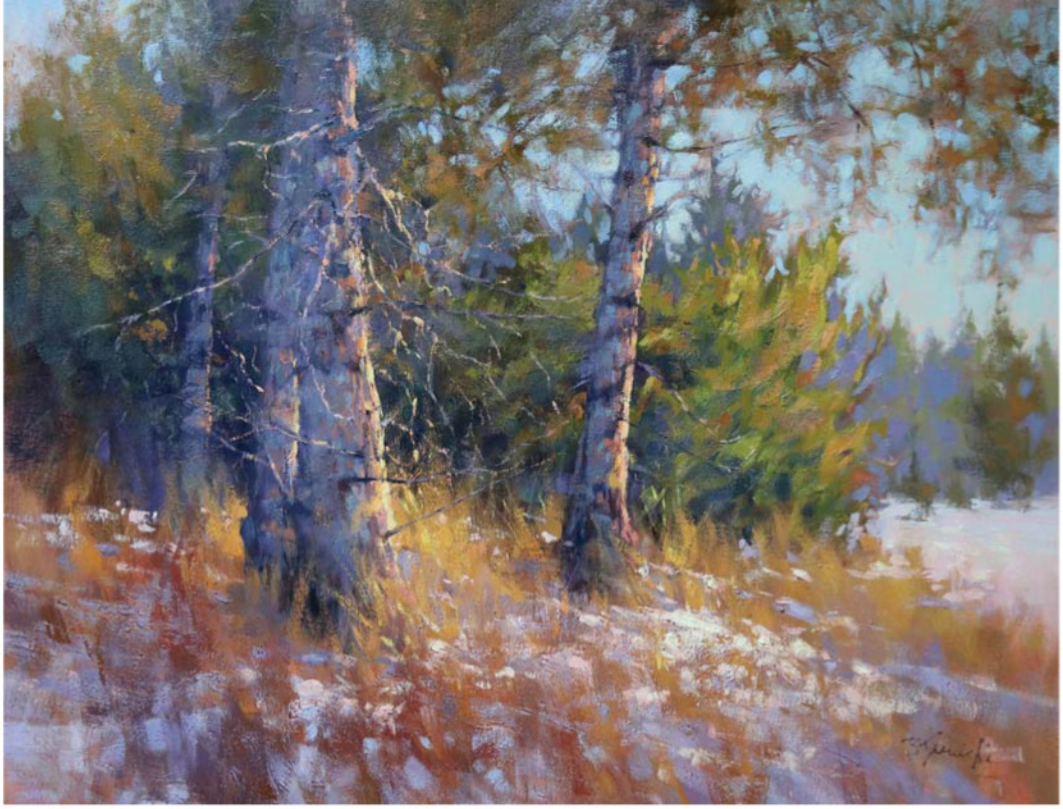
9. **Too busy:** Every scene requires some editing. Adding too many details in less important areas will create busyness. Or, if a painting appears overly spotty or jumpy, it's usually a sign that I have too much value contrast in portions of the landscape.

10. **Too muddy:** If an area of the painting has merged unintentionally with surrounding areas, and the intended color is indistinct, then I remove the pigment in that area and repaint it so that all color use appears deliberate and purposeful.





Even when viewing **Golden Light of Winter Day's End** (pastel on paper, 11x14) at a thumbnail-size, the tree edges still appear soft and vague.

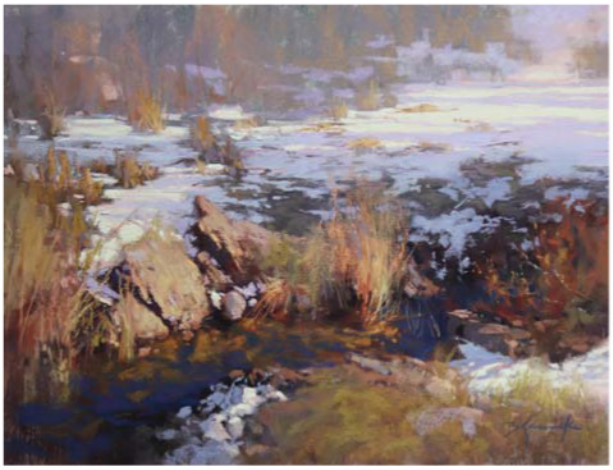


In addition to the placement of the trees and asymmetrical shapes and angles, the varied mark-making was an important quality in **Golden Grove** (oil on canvas, 24x30). I kept a close eye on the variety of marks throughout the painting process before fine-tuning in the final stages.

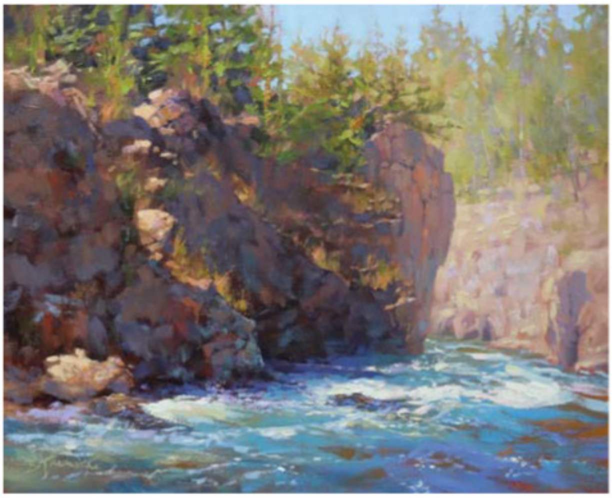
After more than two decades as a landscape painter, I still catch myself making all of these goofs at one time or another. I check for them throughout the painting process, but especially in the final stages when I look for anything that can weaken my painting's objective. I've found that I can catch these errors more easily when I back away from a painting—at least 20 feet from the easel is ideal. For those artists with small studios, snapping a photo on a cell phone and viewing the image as a thumbnail is also a great observational tool for evaluating a piece.

It's only when I feel that I've caught and corrected all my mistakes that I deem a painting "finished." If I find myself stuck, I'll scour the work of my "go-to" artists. Careful observation of how my art heroes have solved landscape problems usually helps me see more clearly where it is that I've gone wrong. Making an effort to evaluate and problem-solve in this way always leads to a stronger outcome.

Barbara Jaenicke (barbarajaenicke.com) lives and paints in Bend, Ore. Her oil and pastel works have won numerous awards and are represented in several galleries throughout the U.S. She's a popular workshop instructor and also offers an array of videos and online instructional materials.



The accuracy of the values for the shadows on the snow and the dark, upright elements in the distance, as well as the vibrancy from foreground to distance, were crucial for capturing a genuine sense of light and depth in **Creekside Contemplations** (pastel on paper, 12x16).



In the final stages of **Firehole River Rapids** (oil on canvas, 16x20), I increased the warm hues in the sunlit areas of the foreground cliff and trees to better capture the strong light. To enhance overall depth, I also brought values closer together and dulled the chroma in the distant cliff and trees.

Encaustic (It's Hot!)

Join the growing number of artists who are warming up to this ancient art.

—COURTNEY JORDAN

SEND US YOUR HACKS!

For a chance to win a free one-month membership to Artists Network (artistsnetwork.com), email your favorite art hack to info@goldenpeakmedia.com with this subject line: "Art Hacks." Submissions chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity.

What Is It?

Encaustic is a painting medium dating back to the first century. It's made with beeswax mixed with crystallized tree sap (damar resin), pigments and color.

On the Surface

A sturdy surface or substrate is a must.

- Wood panels are a common choice, although there are papers and cards made for encaustic.
- Avoid canvas supports because humidity and temperature changes will flex the fabric—cracking the wax.

Add Caution

A fire extinguisher, burn kit and good ventilation are must-haves. Keep flammable materials well away from your heat source.

Add Heat

When melted, encaustic medium can be applied like paint. Heat also fuses the wax layers. You can heat the medium in several ways:

- Use a hot-plate palette to mix colored waxes, which you can then work with on a nonheated surface. Other hot plates let you set your painting surface directly on the plate. In either case, choose a plate with a controllable temperature gauge.
- Encaustic irons spread heated wax. Some artists mix colored wax directly on the heated iron's surface, then apply the wax for abstract effects.
- Many encaustic artists use a blowtorch to focus the heat and better maintain details.

Add Color

You can buy encaustic medium precolored or in its natural whitish form. Use the uncolored wax as is or add color with powdered or ground earth pigments, oils, pastels, crayons or inks. You'll want to avoid acrylics because they're water-based. Try these methods for adding color:

- Apply a colored medium on the surface and then add layers of wax—or use a colored medium over or beside the wax.
- Mix encaustic wax with candle dyes in vibrant colors.
- Add a photo transfer. Black-and-white images lend a vintage vibe.

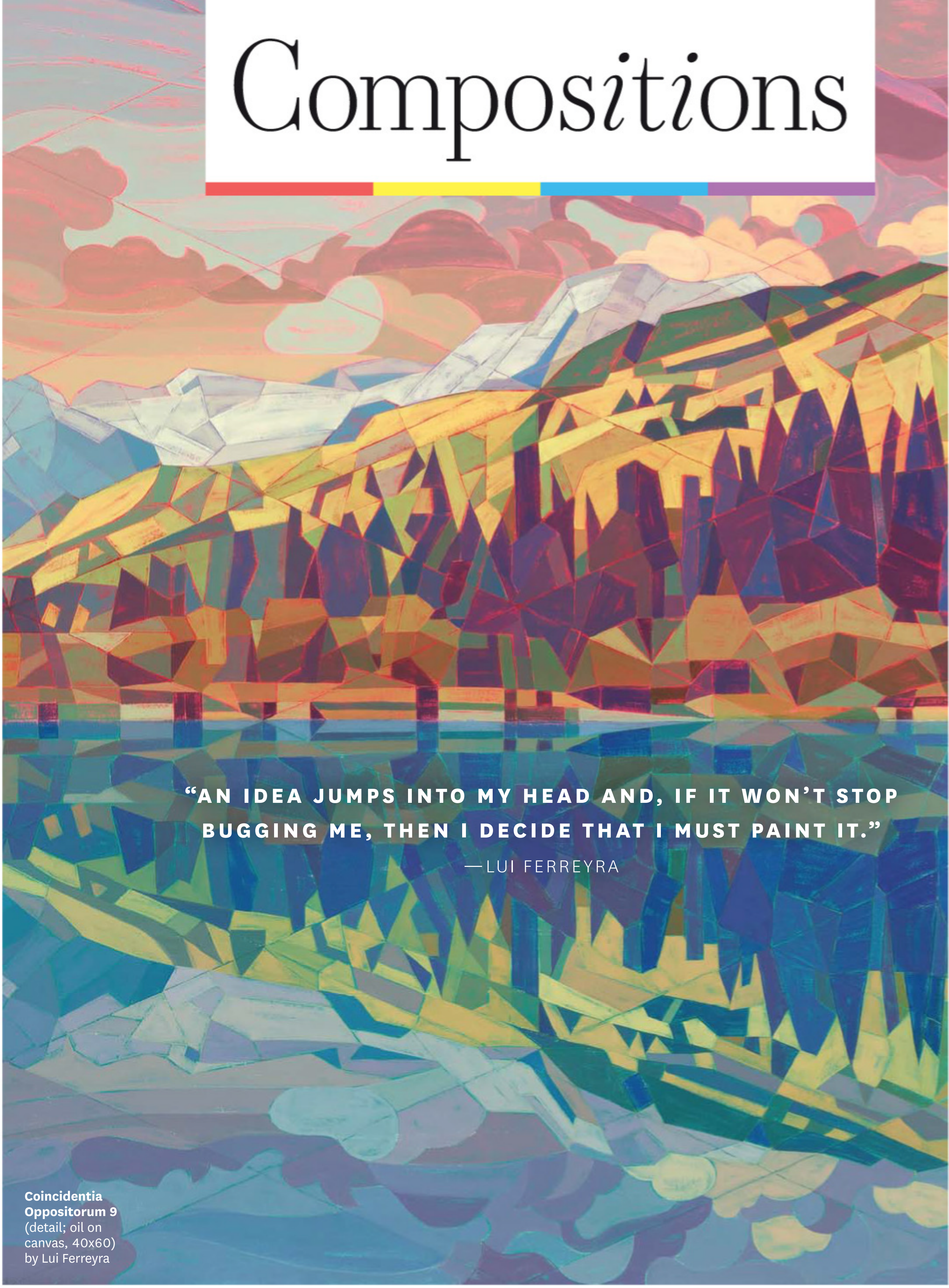
Add Texture

- Make marks with tools, such as a palette knife or color shaper. Experiment with stamps, sponges and rollers. A squeegee works well for smoothing surfaces.
- Create inlays with collage materials—photographs, paper, glass beads, fabric, lace, mosaic tiles and so on.
- Add gold or silver leaf.
- Apply and burn shellac for a filigreed texture. You can also tint the shellac.
- Insert organic materials such as dried flowers, petals and leaves.
- Drag a paintbrush across the heated wax. Natural-bristle brushes work best.
- Play with the wax itself—pour, drip or dribble it.

Final Notes

- A completely cooled encaustic painting can be buffed to a high sheen. This helps prevent the medium from turning white or cloudy—although some artists like these wax blooms in their work.
- Encaustic works can be displayed in a sun-filled room without melting—but avoid extreme temperatures. On the other hand, you can easily rework encaustic simply by reheating it.

Compositions



"AN IDEA JUMPS INTO MY HEAD AND, IF IT WON'T STOP BUGGING ME, THEN I DECIDE THAT I MUST PAINT IT."

—LUI FERREYRA

Coincidentia Oppositorum 9 (detail; oil on canvas, 40x60) by Lui Ferreyra

PRIME TIME

Whether you're a budding artist rekindling a passion set aside for many years, or a committed practitioner in mid-career or professional maturity, the opportunity for growth and creative evolution is ongoing. As the winners in the **16th Annual Over 60 Competition** prove, artists can hit their prime and flourish creatively at any point in their journey, and progress is always possible with commitment and regular practice. ***Edited by Allison Malafronte***

Kathleen Denis

PALM BEACH SHORES, FLORIDA

Blossoms and Brushstrokes (acrylic on linen canvas, 14x11)

I was invited to participate in the New Smyrna Beach Paint Out and asked to do a 2-hour demo called "Blossoms and Brushstrokes" during the event. When I arrived at the demo location, a plant nursery, I looked around for some colorful vases that would create a complementary color scheme. Once I'd selected the orchids, vases and a structure on which to set them, I began thinking about composition and whether I wanted to have more lights or more shadows. To simplify the chaotic scene, I began by determining the position of the focal point. To make that area the "star," I created hard edges, juxtaposed complementary colors and used more detail along with brushstrokes to direct the viewer's eye.

To get started, I created a couple of thumbnail sketches, including a notan and a value-shape study. I then toned my canvas with burnt sienna and, when dry, blocked in darker shapes based on my sketches. This process allows the underpainting color to pop through as I begin to add the local colors on top. This was a busy scene and I was under a time constraint, so I kept reminding myself to "look for the shapes" and "paint the shapes" until it started to come together. I love the painterly brushstrokes and movement I was able to achieve, and the vibrant use of complementary orange and blue, and pink and green.

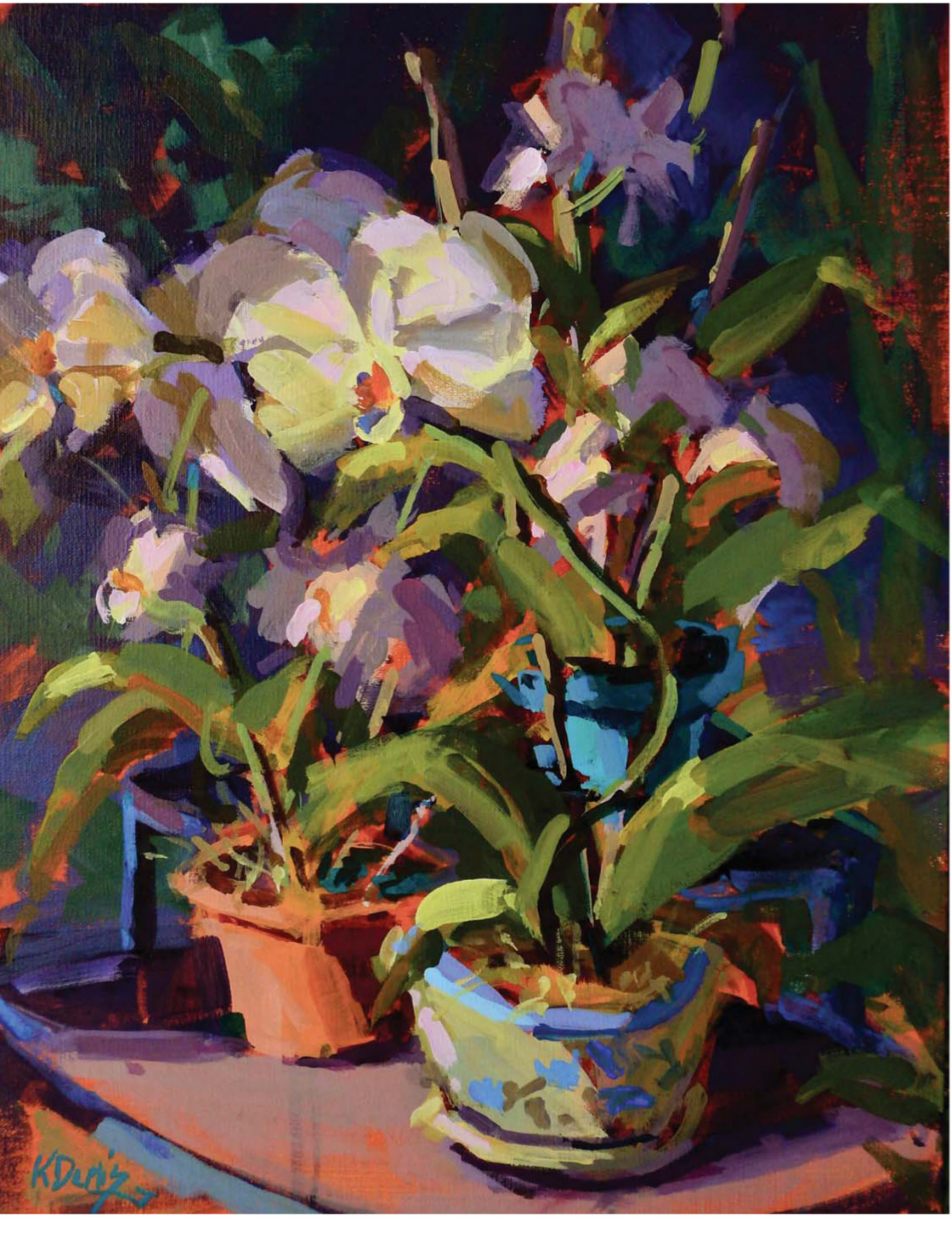
My primary medium is oil, but I recently started experimenting with acrylic to help me avoid getting fussy and overworking the brushstrokes. I'm able to keep the paint clean and energetic with each stroke as I build the painting. Softening edges in acrylic can be a challenge for me, but I've learned to lay progressive values of color next to one another, encouraging a more contemporary look.

VISIT KATHLEENDENIS.COM.

MY ART STORY

I began my first drawing and painting lessons at the age of four, and my love of art eventually led me to earn a degree in graphic design from the University of Miami. In 1995, my art/designs were licensed by worldwide corporations and appeared on hundreds of home decor and gift products for outlets such as HomeGoods and Bed, Bath & Beyond. I continued to study with notable artists, and my work began to win awards and publication in prominent art magazines. About 10 years ago, I started participating in plein air paint-outs and teaching at art centers and discovered my love for both.

GOOD ADVICE Taking the extra time to prepare preliminary studies is vitally important for me and has made a huge difference in my work. If I start a painting directly on the canvas without first working out composition, value shapes and colors, it's unlikely to be successful. Also, having worked out these initial steps, I can enjoy the painting process more once I get to work on the canvas. I always return to the value study before finishing to compare and make necessary changes.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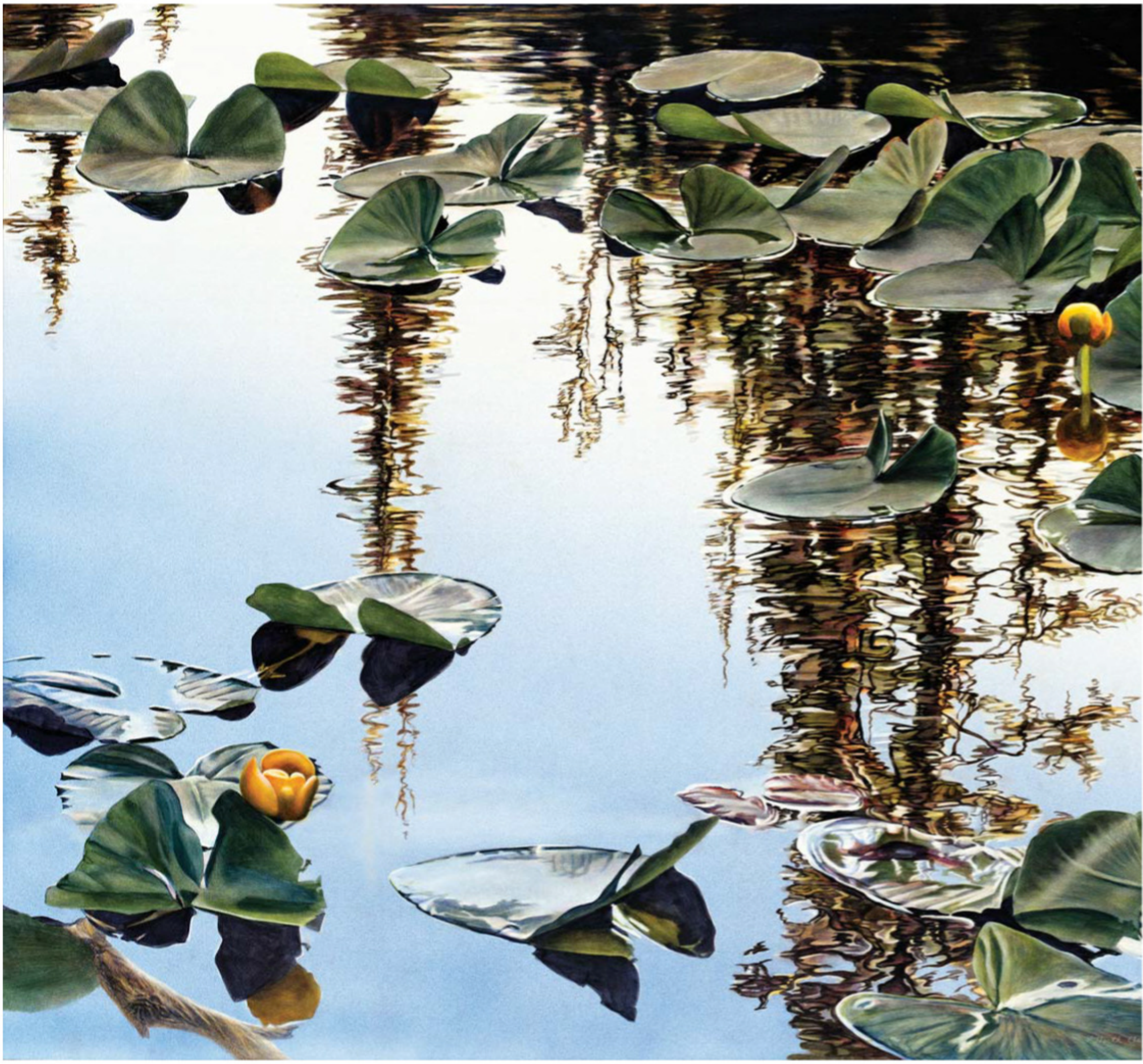
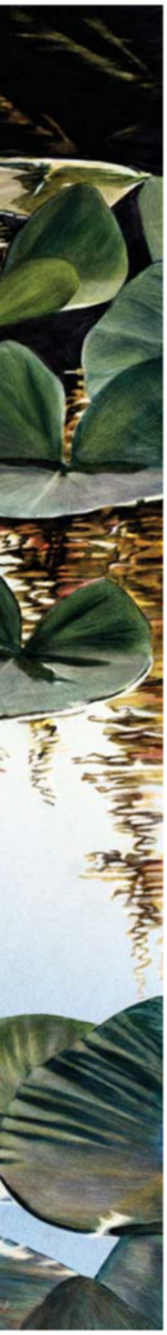


“JOIN LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ART ORGANIZATIONS. IT’S DIFFICULT TO DUPLICATE THE WEALTH OF OPPORTUNITIES AND INFORMATION THESE GROUPS OFFER, AND SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH SUPPORTIVE ARTISTS AND FRIENDS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.”



Linda Heath Clark

SHINGLE SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Pond Lilies (scratchboard on Claybord, 30x36)

When I was a child, my dad took us camping in Yellowstone National Park, where we visited a beautiful pond located on the Continental Divide. Dad explained the concept of the Continental Divide, and I remember standing there for the longest time, waiting to see the water flow in two directions. Later, on a cross-country trip with my own daughter, I made sure to stop at that pond and take reference photos, which became the inspiration for *Pond Lilies*.

Using Photoshop, I combined elements from several photos, intentionally selecting specific leaves and lilies and removing others to declutter the final composition and to establish negative space—areas for the eye to rest. *Pond Lilies*, like the rest of my current work, was made with acrylic on Claybord using subtractive scratchboard techniques. I began by painting simplified shapes of the leaves and tree reflections with thinned, high-flow acrylic. I then selectively removed the dried paint using knives, scalpels, fiberglass brushes, steel wool and tattoo needles to expose the white-clay surface below. I reapplied washes of acrylic and scratched again. The scratching creates highlights and details. Washes of acrylic tint the scratches, adding contours and shadows. When viewed from a distance, the crisp scratches and subtle color changes translate into a photorealistic image.

Before this piece, I had only used an airbrush for backgrounds. I wanted the pond to have the smooth reflection of a cloudless sky, which seemed the perfect application for the tool.

Pond Lilies features highly realistic leaves and lilies with abstracted reflections of the trees, which I love to portray, but for me, the work is, at its root, a memory piece. Visiting the pond has become a tradition, and the sharper memories of recent visits with my daughter blend with soft memories of my childhood. I like that what was omitted is as important as what remains.

GOOD ADVICE

Years ago, feeling my work had plateaued and hoping to regain the excitement of creating art, I began making nonobjective abstracts—something quite new for me. The advantage was not knowing where the pieces were going, and so these works seemed to create themselves. When I began working realistically again, my approach to subjects and compositions had changed. Finding something that shook up my approach to art was just the kickstart I needed. If you're lacking inspiration and motivation, consider trying something different.

MY ART STORY

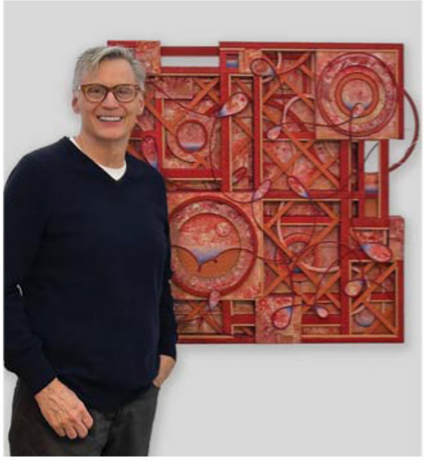
After earning a degree in art, with a minor in biology, I worked for 16 years as a scientific illustrator, mostly depicting insects for environmental and agricultural publications and scientific journals. My journey to fine art was a circuitous one. I created animal portraits and wildlife art for several years. Then, in 2005, I began painting landscapes in acrylic on canvas and exhibiting at shows and galleries. Although that work was also realistic, the looser style and visible brushstrokes were new to me. About 10 years ago, I started exploring the acrylic-on-Claybord scratchboard technique, which I use today. To further develop the method, I've experimented with different subject matter—florals, landscape, still life and even abstracts. I've been awarded Master Scratchboard Artist status by the International Society of Scratchboard Artists and am also a Signature Member of American Women Artists.

VISIT LINDAHEATHCLARK.COM.

Chuck Fischer

NEW HOPE, PENNSYLVANIA

Palladio, No. 2
(copper, wood, acrylic, modeling paste and gesso on copper-plated aluminum, 48x36x3)



A major component of my work is not knowing how the piece will develop. I purposely don't do preparatory sketching but rather trust the process of building the work. I chose copper-plated aluminum as the background for this piece and, early in the process, I developed a color palette and textural elements inspired by my travels to Italy and my time at the American Academy in Rome, where I was a Visiting Artist. When complete, some classical architectural elements revealed themselves to me, and I named the piece *Palladio, No. 2* after Andrea Palladio, the Italian Renaissance architect. Palladio's philosophy was to create a harmonious style with three virtues—calm, harmony and dignity—which I feel I achieved in this work.

GOOD ADVICE

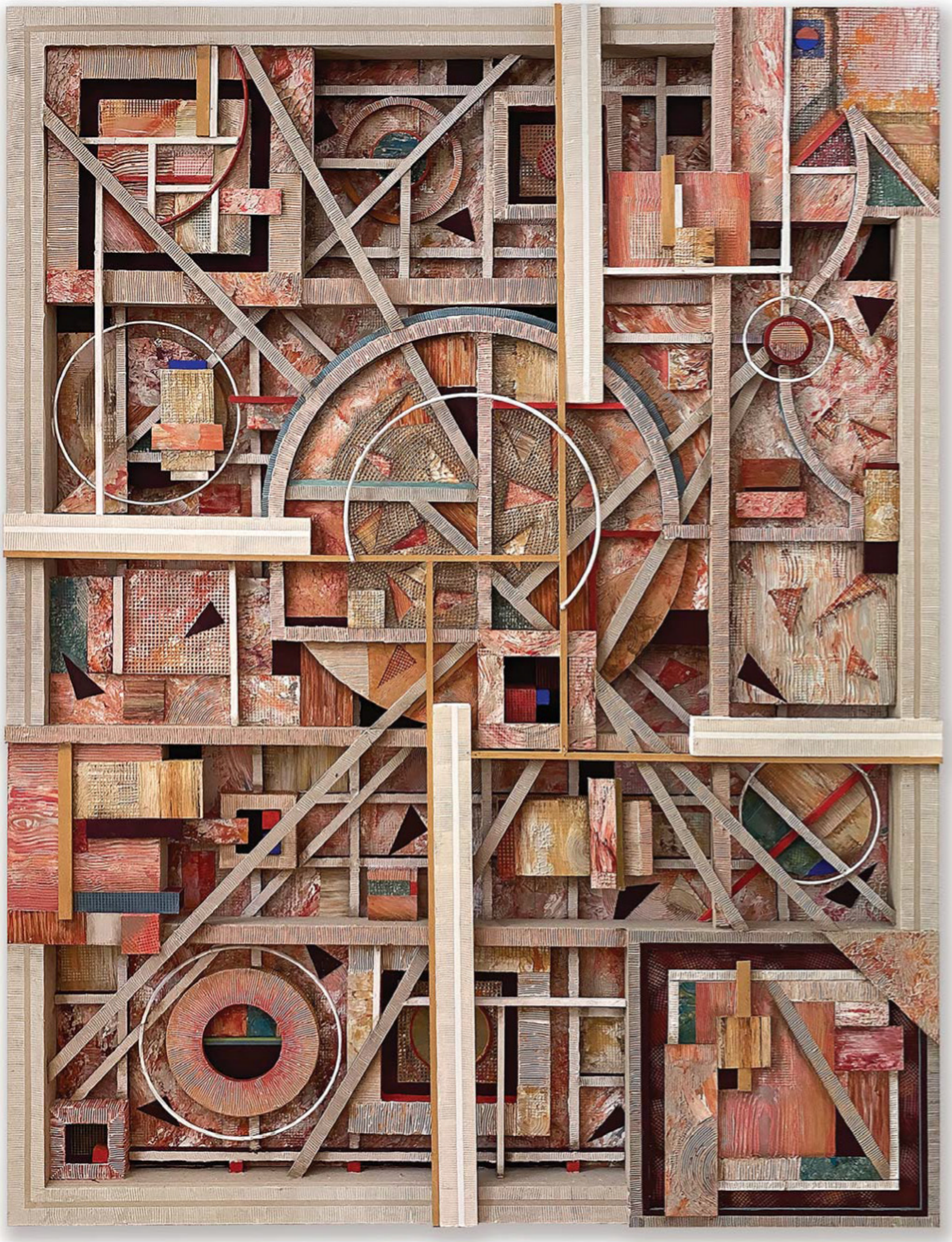
Some great advice in the beginning of my career came from the designer Albert Hadley, who said to me, "You're an artist. Be bold, loosen up and know when to stop." My artist-mentor, Bruce Dorfman, always asked me to identify the counterpoint in a piece, which is a conversation I still have with my work every day.

MY ART STORY

I studied architecture for two years at the University of Kansas but found the program too engineering-oriented, so I switched my major and received a degree in design. I then moved to New York City, opened a decorative art studio in Union Square and was fortunate to collaborate with many of the top architecture and decorating firms in the city. This led me to a focus on creating products (linens, wallpaper and fabric) for the home, some of which are in the permanent collection of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. In 2002, my pop-up book, *Great American Houses and Gardens*, was published by Rizzoli, the first of eight published over the next 10 years. I studied with Bruce Dorfman at the Art Students League of New York for two years and have dedicated myself full-time to my fine art practice since 2015.

VISIT CHUCKFISCHERSTUDIO.COM.

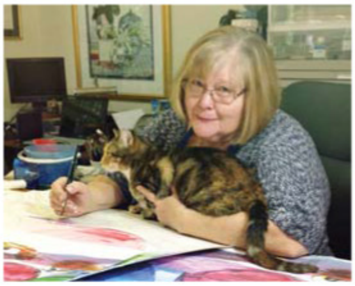
"WORK ON YOUR ART DAILY, APPLY TO JURIED CALLS, AND SHARE YOUR WORK WITH AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THE NEXT COLLECTOR OR GALLERY OWNER WILL SEE YOUR WORK AND BECOME INTERESTED IN BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP."



Anne Hightower Patterson

SALUDA COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Contemplation (watercolor on Arches 300-lb. hot-pressed paper, 12½x17)



While visiting Havana in 2017, on a sunny Sunday morning tour, I caught a glimpse of this young man sitting in the piazza. The sunlight shining on him made him absolutely glow. He had a journal and was lost in his writing, never noticing me as I quietly took his photo.

I usually use 140-lb. cold-pressed Arches paper for my paintings, but chose 300-lb. hot-pressed paper for this piece, because I wanted a smoother surface. This paper still has enough tooth to allow for some building of color by glazing, if done carefully. When I was nearly finished, I realized that I hadn't left any transitional edges, so I went back in and created a couple of lost edges to merge with the background. Rarely does the finished work match my initial vision, but *Contemplation* came very close. I feel it creates a mood that allows the viewer to wonder about the young man.

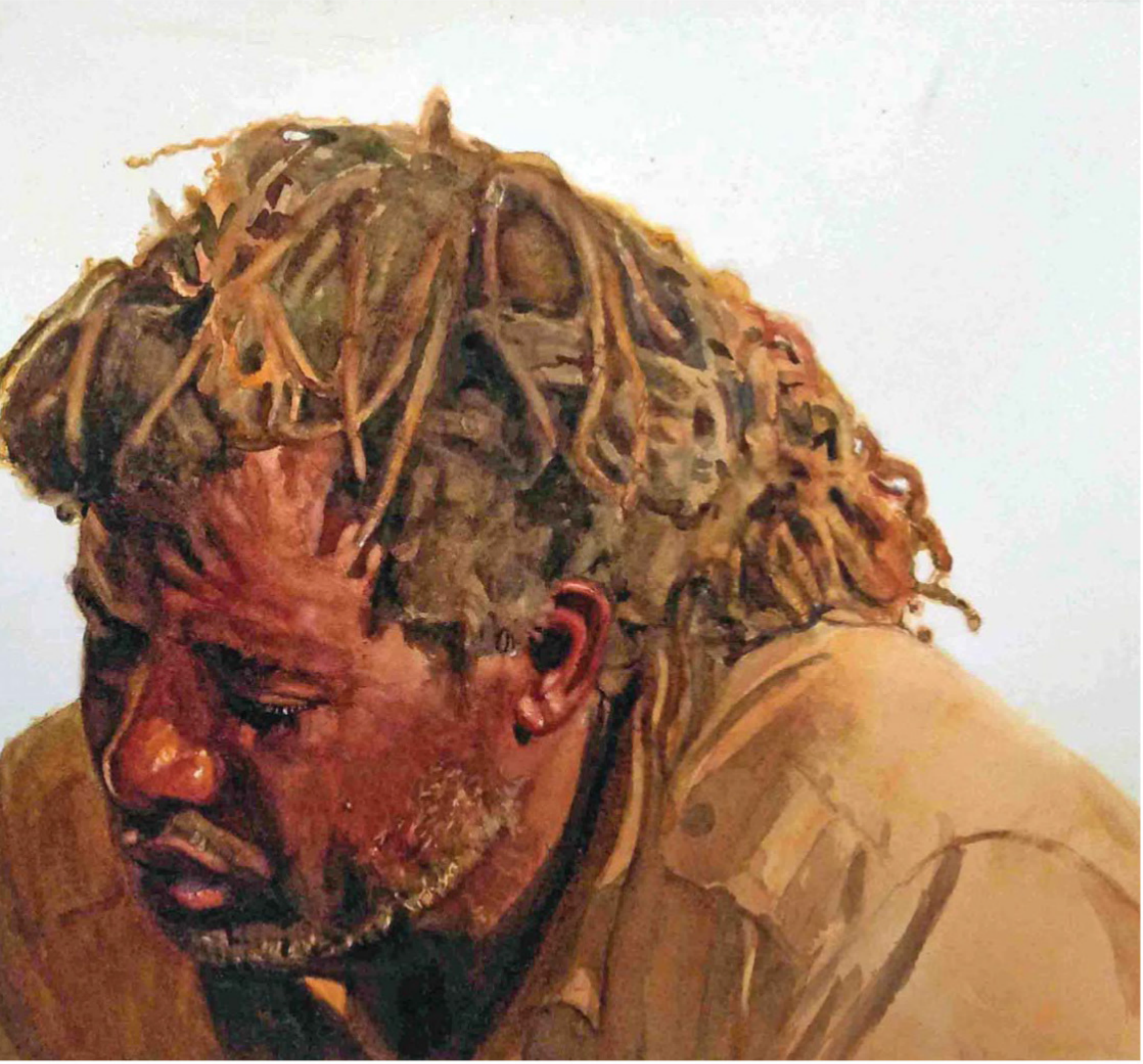
MY ART STORY

I studied art in high school and earned a degree in studio art in 1972. At the beginning of my career, I taught art in middle school and high school, and then began painting professionally part-time in 1984. After retiring from public education in 2002, I started painting full-time. Joining organizations such as the South Carolina Watermedia Society introduced me to many more artists and their work.

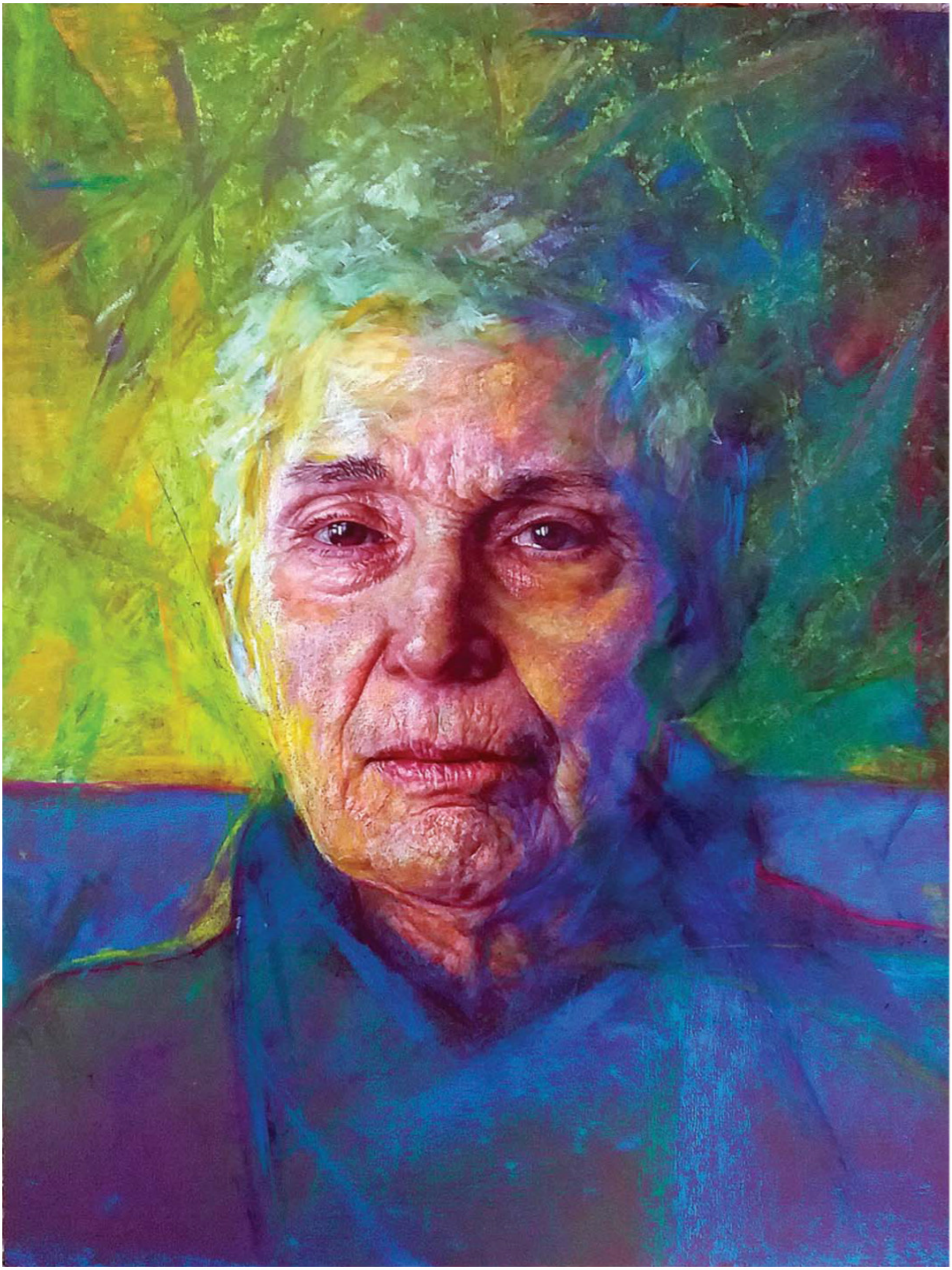
VISIT ANNEHIGHTOWER-PATTERSON.COM.

GOOD ADVICE About 10 years ago, I had my work critiqued by artist Linda Baker. Her feedback was so clarifying to me. For the first time I felt I'd met someone who could guide me in the right direction, and I continued to seek her guidance as a way to identify areas for growth and improvement. Now, as a teacher, I counsel my students not to compare their art journey to another's and offer this advice:

- Consider where you want to go with your art, figure out what you need to do to get there and then develop a consistent art habit.
- Understand that you will fail along the way. We all do. Each failure is a building block, so don't let failure be a stopping place. Instead, double-down on your goals and create new strategies.
- Find someone that you can trust to give you advice about your work and your journey.



“BECAUSE I’M A GOAL-ORIENTED PERSON, I SET YEARLY GOALS FOR MYSELF. THIS HELPS ME SEE HOW I’VE PROGRESSED. PLANNED GROWTH WILL HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER, STRONGER AND MORE CONSISTENT PAINTER. NEVER GIVE UP!”



Peggy Magovern

NEW HOPE, PENNSYLVANIA

Carol with Blue Sweater (colored pencil on sanded paper, 20x16)

This piece was inspired by my friend, Carol. She's deaf, I'm half-deaf, and we developed a kinship over our hearing-loss challenges. My life-long study of facial nuances helped me to decipher visual clues for what was being said around me, and that has certainly helped my art. I wanted to create a portrait that communicates her strength and sensitivity while she fights against isolation in a hearing world. As a way to honor her complexity, I used warm and cool hues, polished and textural accents, strong and subtle values, and features that were either detailed or suggested. The portrait wasn't intended to be merely a likeness; I wanted to describe something deeper.

I love colored pencils and, more recently, have enjoyed using them on sanded paper. *Carol with Blue Sweater* was my first work on sanded paper. Unlike drawing paper, a sanded surface wreaks havoc when applying delicate pencil strokes, and—in this case—I welcomed that. A finely sharpened pencil lends itself perfectly for finite detail, especially if the artist wants to maintain control, but I had begun to feel unchallenged and much too comfortable. I decided to release control and hoped new discovery could take place. That approach offered freedom like I've never known before.

I love that Carol's portrait became something that was not only seen but also felt. The reactions I received from viewers were described on an emotional level, and I think that was in part because I left something to the imagination. Transitioning details into less defined areas provokes the viewer to complete the message. Using pastel over pencil, l blurred information into mood and mystery: small tonal accents manipulated the turn of the mouth, reflections in the eyes offer a glimpse into her character, as did the set of her chin. Although her gaze is straight-on, one wonders: Is she guarded? Does she seek understanding? Is she confrontational? Vulnerable? By studying Carol's facial nuances, every viewer can decipher the subtle clues to decide for themselves what is being communicated.

MY ART STORY

I earned a degree in studio art from the University of Hayward, in California, but my portfolio was stolen from my professor's office before my graduation. So, with no work to share, I became a dental assistant instead and enjoyed some after-hours drawing with graphite. Four long years later, I cold-called an advertising department to show some of those sketches, and my commercial-art career began. Later, working at Banana Republic, I learned to use colored pencil on the job. Later still, I began to freelance on a national basis, with publishing and editorial clients that included the *Smithsonian* magazine and *The Wall Street Journal*. I was commissioned to create a portrait for a Hearst property in California, and fine art venues soon followed, including The de Young Museum and Beat Museum, in San Francisco. Eventually, I began teaching national and international workshops in colored pencil to round out a career spanning 40 years.

VISIT PMAGOVERN.COM.

GOOD ADVICE

A pivotal moment in my career was when I ignored the questions in my mind about my creative decisions. For so many years, I had art directors and clients dictating my art. Well into my fine art career, it was still difficult to avoid seeking the opinions of others, but recently, I've ventured into a personal connection with my work. I identify with my unique expression and consider it an authentic representation of who I am as an artist. Some of the struggle is still there, but I have to believe in my personal, aesthetic view and express it without apology. Thankfully, the more I affirm that my work has a rightful place in the vast field of art, the less I question my purpose—and my vision.

Margaret Minardi

NORTHPORT, NEW YORK

The Dream (colored pencil on Stonehenge paper, 22x20)

I've been working on a "White on White" series for more than three years. It includes high-realism portraits inspired by my students and my daughter—subjects close to my heart. As a high-school art educator of 30 years, I was privileged to work with teenagers who were magical and complex. They created images that seemed impossible for ones so young, full of both strength and fragility. It's my hope that some of that beauty is captured in this series.

Formally, this work is about light and point of view. I have a patch of light in my house that comes in through the living-room window onto the floor. Many of the drawings of my students are staged in this patch of light, in a reclining position, which lends itself to a dramatic overhead perspective. My creative process has evolved through a change of media. After developing an allergy to oils, I began experimenting with different media. I tried colored pencils and found them to be easily controlled and therefore perfect for the realism I was attempting. They offer a wide variety of color and are easily layered.

I feel like *The Dream* is a culmination of my 45 years of making art. I've been working from one series to another, making discoveries in each one. Sometimes I learn about composition, movement, positioning or texture. I've also learned that the juxtaposition of a figure and an object creates a story. In this piece, for instance, the sculpted bunny begs the question: "Why is the bunny there?"

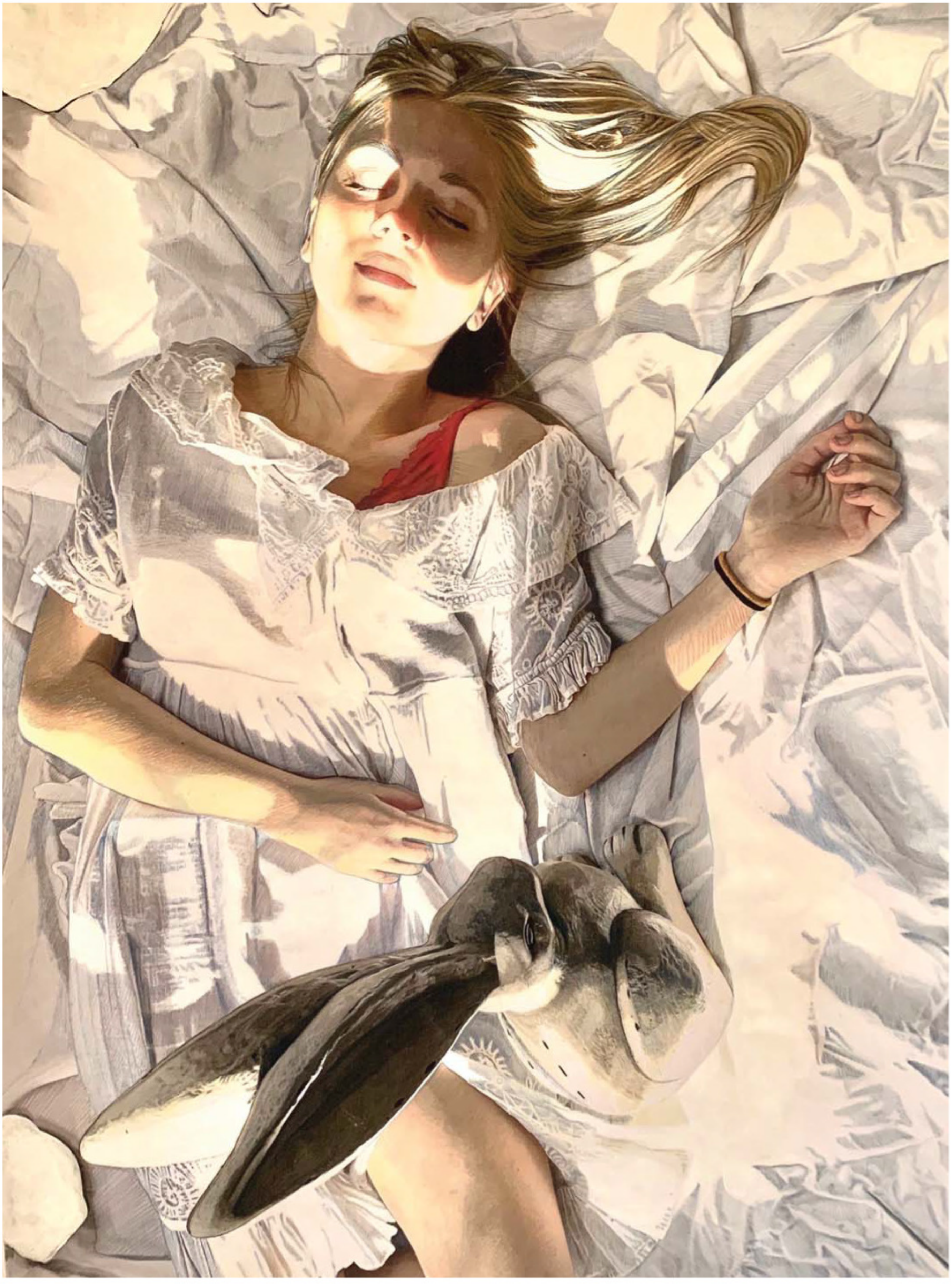
MY ART STORY

In high school I attended an afternoon program that provided atelier experience, which became the foundation of my education. I attended S.U.N.Y. Purchase, where I received a degree in fine art, with honors, and the Faculty Award For Excellence in Drawing and Painting. Those were my abstract-expressionist years, when I was heavily influenced by Willem DeKooning. I also received a Master's degree from Dowling College, on Long Island. The majority of my training, however, has been self-taught. I have worked on art just about every day of my life with very few periods of creative block.

▶ VISIT MARGARETMINARDIARTIST.COM.

GOOD ADVICE For most of my years as an artist and educator, I put my work in the closet. My focus was showing my students' work and helping them get into the colleges of their choice. I was basically afraid of promoting my own work. Then, in 2015, a friend encouraged me to get my art out into the world. I've since participated in more than 150 solo, small-group and juried shows. It began with one juried show at a small museum, where I won an award. The museum then asked me to exhibit in a group show. Currently, my work is on view in a variety of venues, including the Heckscher Museum of Art, on Long Island.

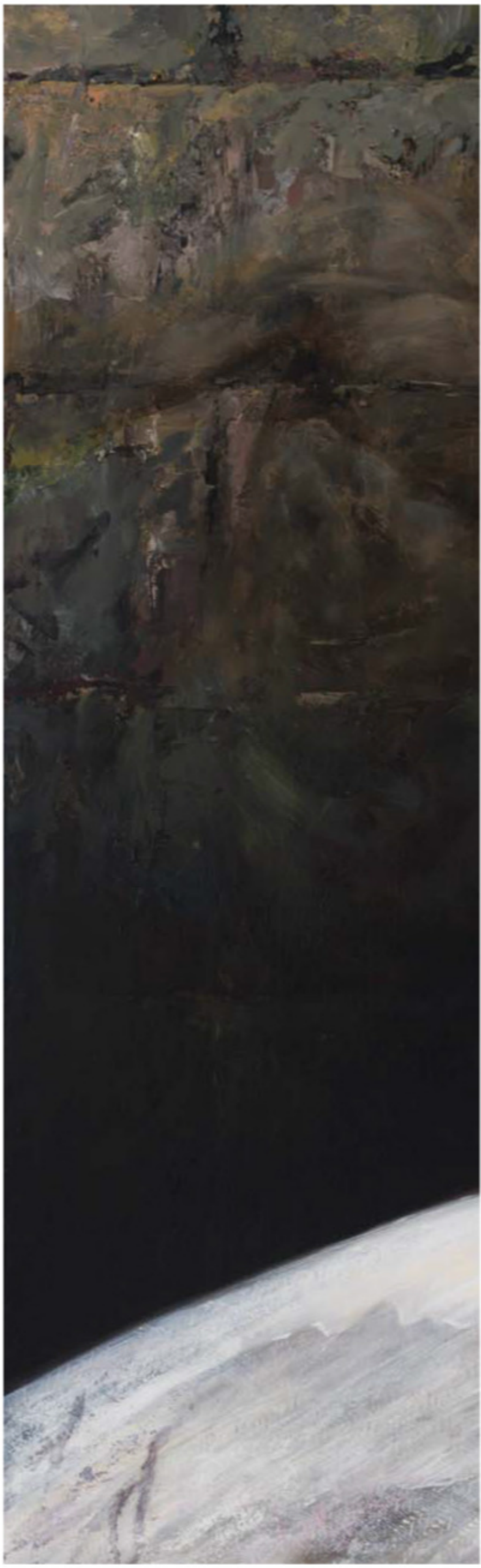
In light of my experience, I'd encourage others to participate in as many juried shows as possible to get your work out there and seen. Participate in art walks and library shows to get started. Every show is an opportunity to meet other artists as well as curators and gallery owners.

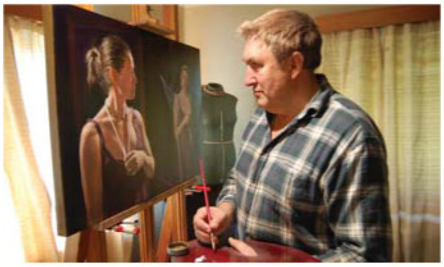


Jon Bøe Paulsen

OSLO, NORWAY

Mary Magdalene SangReal (oil on canvas, 38x45½)





One of my collectors wanted me to paint his partner, but was worried that a straightforward portrait might be a bit boring. After I presented him with a pen-sketch proposal for *Mary Magdalene SangReal*, he was convinced and ready to proceed.

My creative process starts with visualizing the picture in my imagination. Next, I create a tableau, which I photograph. That process has become a fully integrated part of my work in recent years, especially the aspect of considering the models' postures and the lighting situation. Some of my compositions become so complicated that it would be impossible for the models to keep their poses over time. The lighting would also be impossible to maintain while working on the painting.

In this piece, I love Mary's red blouse, which symbolizes her possible royal lineage. According to the Bible, Mary Magdalene may have been the first to find Jesus wrapped in the shroud. I'm also particularly satisfied with the depiction of the Resurrection, which is faintly visible on the stone wall in the background. Not everyone notices it at first glance.

Although not a believer, I've made several pieces that feature Christ-related motifs, as part of a frieze. I call them my historical paintings.

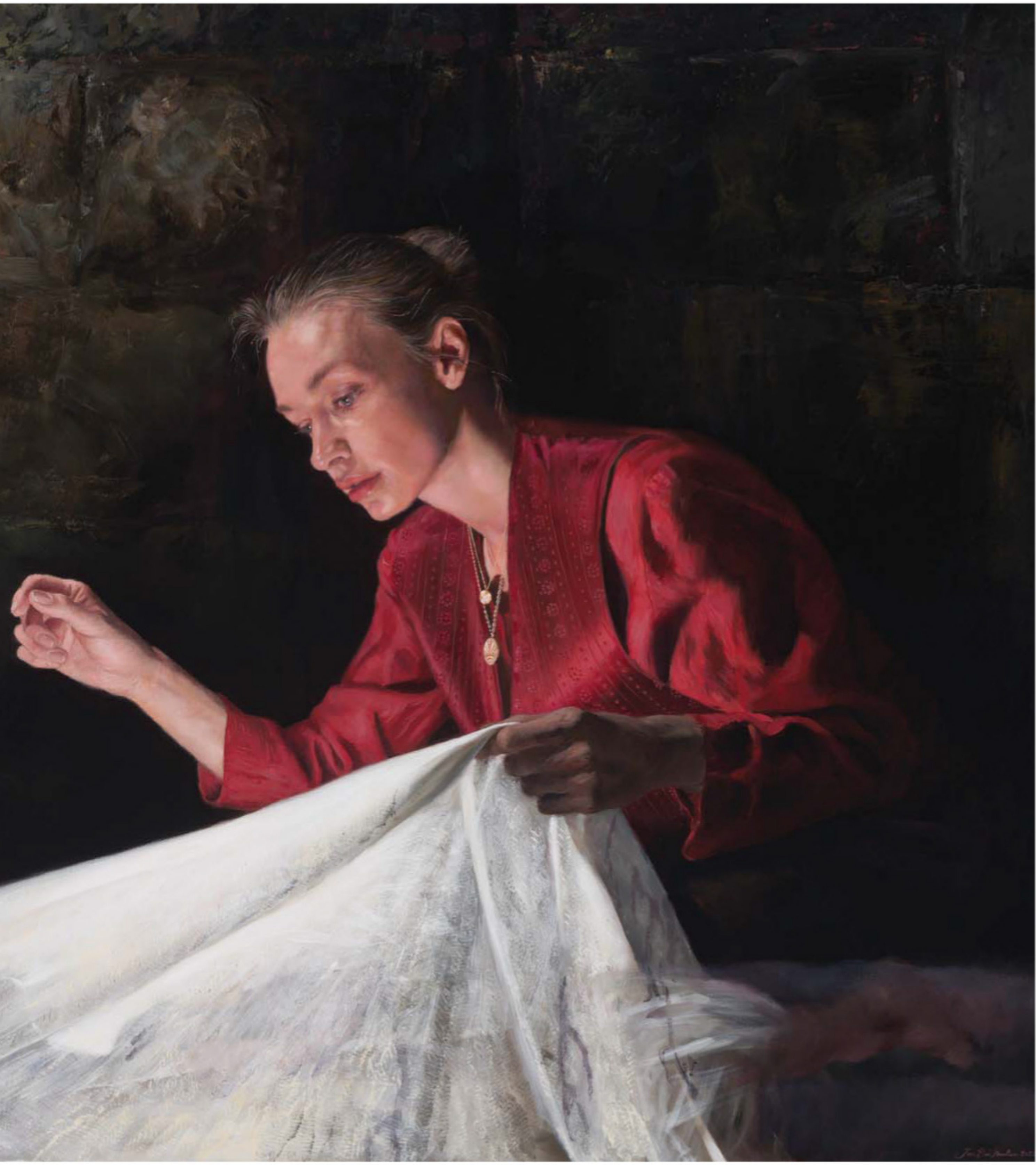
VISIT JONBOEPAULSEN.NO.

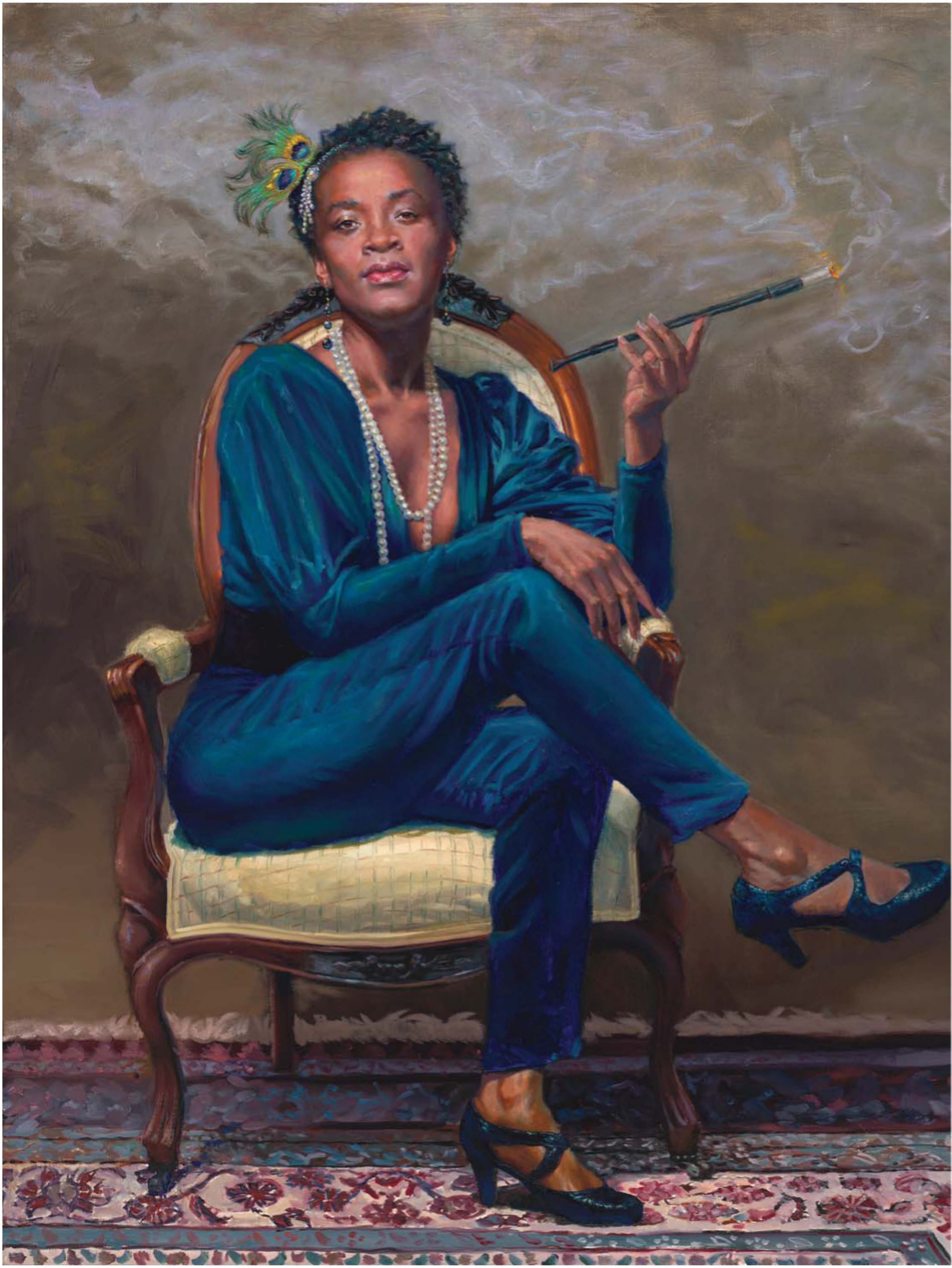
MY ART STORY

In 1980, after studying for a fall semester at the School of Art, in Boston, I was accepted to the Norwegian Academy of Fine Arts. In the same month, I made my debut with a solo exhibition, in Oslo. It was around this time that I also spent some time living in Paris. During my 42 years as a visual artist, I've participated in more than 70 exhibitions in the U.S., England, Denmark, Sweden, Spain and France, and received a number of awards.

GOOD ADVICE

I've learned that it's not useful to be too strongly attached to artist idols or masters of the past or present. Of course they've created amazing artwork, which you can study and learn from, but you are an independent person. Find your style. Even if your efforts appear technically helpless at first, keep at it. Your artistic energy and temperament will shine through.

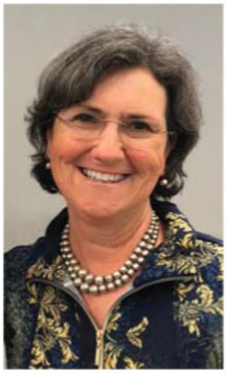




Patricia McMahon Rice

WARRENTON, VIRGINIA

Insouciance (oil on mounted linen, 30x20)



One of my favorite models, Gazelle, sews all of her own outfits. She created the costume featured in *Insouciance* as an homage to Josephine Baker, the American-born French dancer, singer and actress, who even spied for France during World War II.

Gazelle struck many wonderful poses with that iconic cigarette holder, but I was drawn to this one because of the very direct gaze and expression on her face. There was such a confident nonchalance about it, even a hint of mirth. It was the look of someone completely comfortable in her own skin, possessing that rare sort of effortless self-assurance. To me it captured the same confidence that Baker herself might have shown sitting in that chair.

I don't have one set way of creating a painting. When working on a copper surface, as I often do, I use a very different approach than when I'm working on mounted linen. The biggest challenge for me with this particular work was painting the smoke from the subject's cigarette. It was just a prop, and there was no way to put a lit cigarette on the end. So I had to reach back to early childhood memories of watching the smoke drift and dance from my father's cigarette.

I've painted Gazelle many times and have always been fascinated by her beauty and grace. Her hands alone are like a ballet. I knew that I had to capture this pose in all its drama.

> **"THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS. PAINT WHAT YOU LOVE, WHETHER YOU THINK OTHERS WILL LOVE IT OR NOT. AND DON'T COMPARE YOUR TRAJECTORY TO OTHERS. MINE HAS BEEN ONE OF SLOW, BUT STEADY GROWTH—AT LEAST 20 YEARS IN THE MAKING."**

MY ART STORY

Although I grew up drawing, printmaking and sculpting in classes both in and outside of high school, I didn't go on to pursue studies in art, but I never stopped loving it. In my 40s, when a friend asked me to teach her daughter to draw, I started a class, and very soon I was teaching seven classes. Then I knew what I wanted, but I figured it would probably take 10 years or more to get there. After struggling to find classes, my husband was reading my *Artists Magazine* and saw an ad for Daniel Greene's summer workshops. I went for three summers, and followed that with classes from Robert Liberace, who lived nearby. I've now studied under him for more than 16 years. Both artists put an emphasis on Old Master methods and materials. Rob's class on Sorolla, with his brilliant use of color in light and shadow, was life-changing for me.

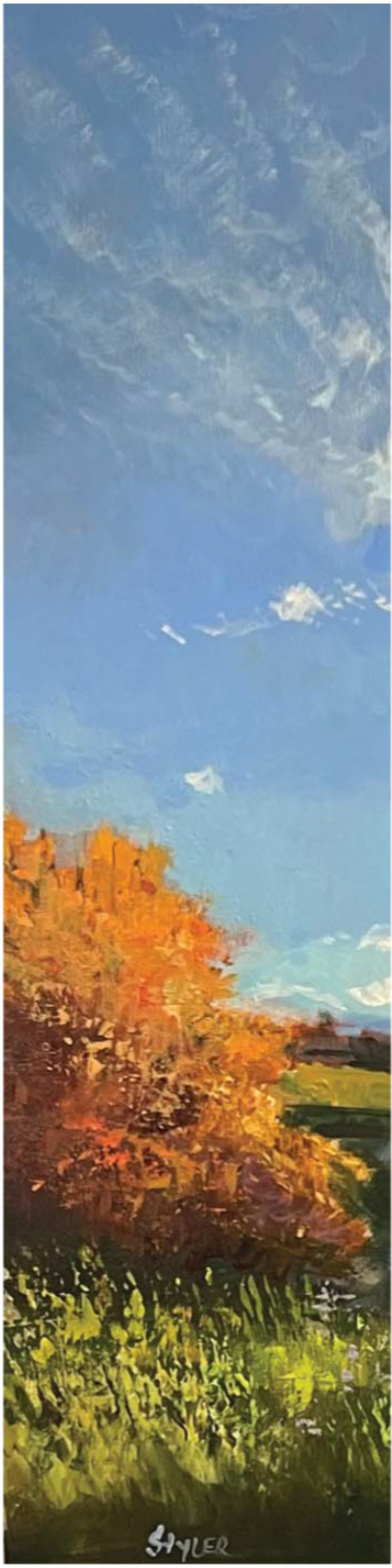
GOOD ADVICE In 2008, all of my children were in the military and scattered all over the world. I leased a studio, and committed to painting six days a week, 10 hours a day. As I logged long hours behind the easel, I began to paint more intuitively. I made the decision to paint whether I felt inspired or not. I'm convinced that the good days of painting result from painting on the "bad days."

▶ **VISIT PATRICIAMCMAHONRICE.COM.**

Anda Styler

SANDY HOOK, CONNECTICUT

Early October (acrylic on linen, 30x30)



I love October light. It's golden and rich and lights up the landscape with warmth. *Early October* was inspired by the landscape where I live. The late-afternoon light was powerful. The shadows were long and deep across the landscape, and the wispy clouds were reflecting sunlight with some gray moodiness. I felt captivated by the sky and the chill in the air. I wanted to capture the intense color of the maple tree and the breath and width of that amazing sky. Photos are good for reference while painting, but this piece is much more about my connection to nature and remembrance of how it feels in the moment.

I always start a painting by doing several thumbnail sketches, and then selecting one. I create a value study using ultramarine blue, quinacridone, burnt orange and phthalo blue (green shade). I establish the lights and the darks, and then see how the composition is working, making adjustments as I go. I used a limited palette in this case, making my own greens, to create harmony. I ended up reworking the entire painting because it felt flat to me. When I remembered the feeling of being there that day, the painting came alive.

What I love most about *Early October* is the movement in the sky, the sense of distance and the light in the landscape—that fleeting kiss of light that moves me so much at this time of year.

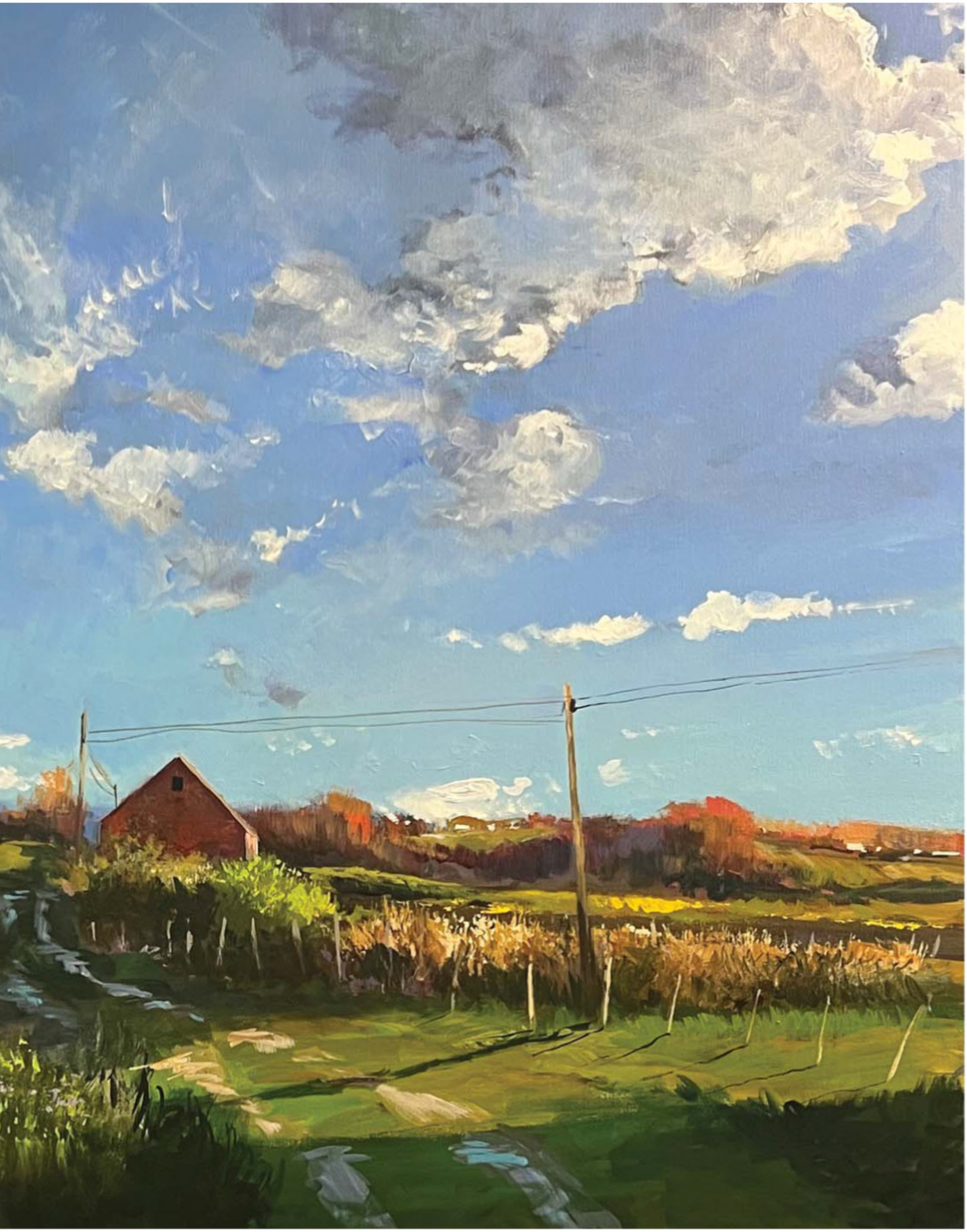
MY ART STORY

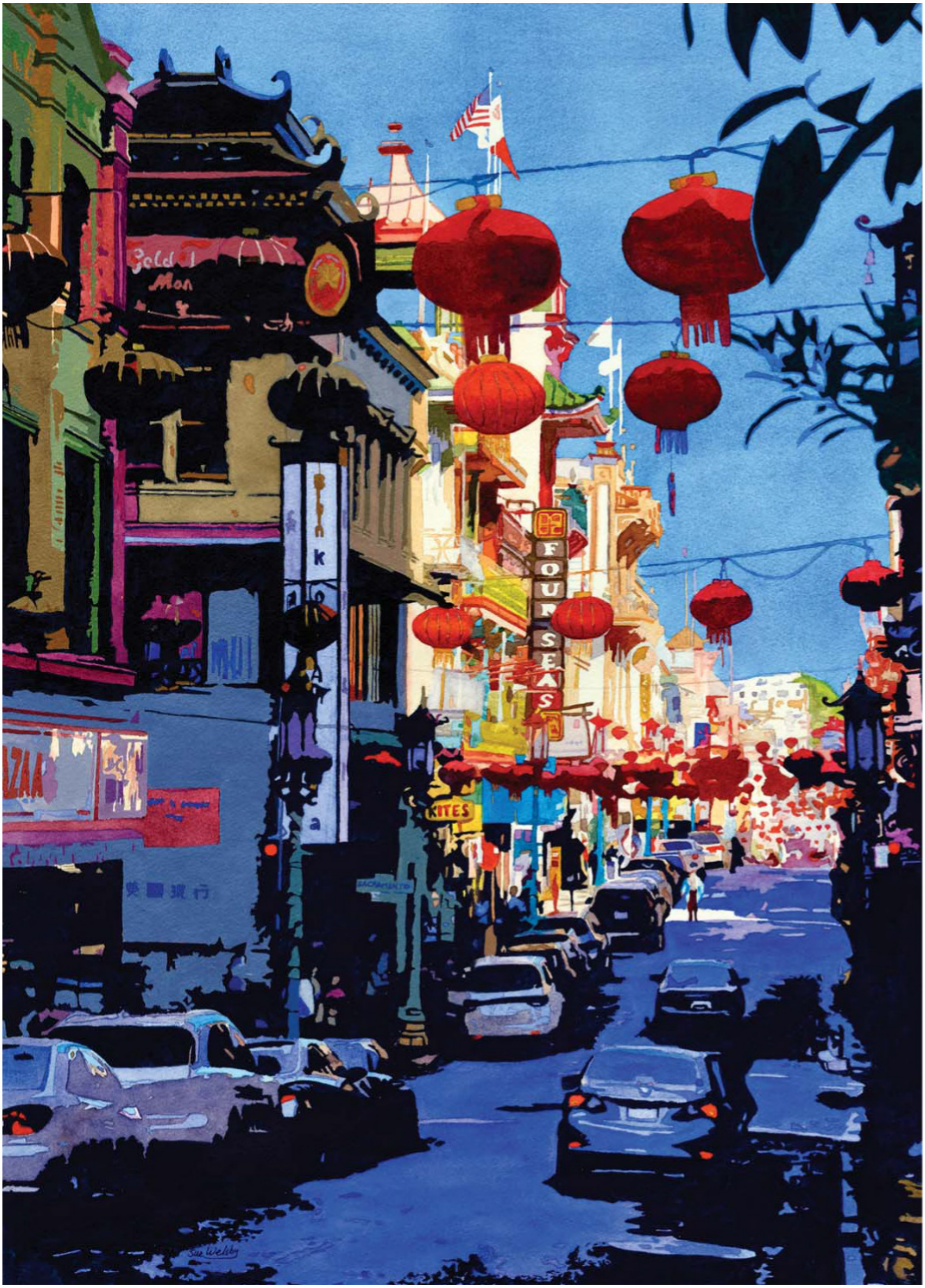
I fell in love with painting as a teenager. I had quit high school, but later went back and got my GED. Then I applied to Parsons School of Design, in 1979, and graduated four years later with a degree in fine art. After working as an art director for a publishing company, I decided to make a living as a full-time artist, working all day and painting all night for many years. My art has been shown in galleries across the U.S., and has been featured in several solo shows. I teach plein air classes at various art organizations in Connecticut.

GOOD ADVICE Drawing is the absolute essential foundation for painting. Take time to study the patterns of nature—how the darks make the lights and the lights make the darks. These patterns create form, depth, texture and light.

Observe nature or whatever subject you're drawn to keenly. See more than just the object; intuit the feeling of what it is. At some point, put away the reference and dive deep into your own creative process.

VISIT ANDASTYLERFINEART.COM.

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FOUR SEAS
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Sue Welsby

CLERMONT, FLORIDA

Sunlight on Grant (watercolor on paper, 30x22)

When I took a photograph of this scene, it wasn't with the intention of painting it. I was drawn to the bright sunshine at the end of the street and wanted to capture it. Later, as I was going through my photographs on my iPad, I kept returning to this one again and again.

Painting *Sunlight on Grant* took me far out of my comfort zone. It was my first painting on a full sheet. I'm a watercolor purist, and I like to paint with clean, transparent colors. I really struggled, however, to get the depth, values and appearance that I wanted for the foreground using that approach, so I decided to tint the opaque grays in my palette. It took several attempts until I was happy with the values. The process was fun at times, and frustrating at other points. I tend to be very controlled with my painting, but here I had to loosen up and just make marks on the paper.

> **"MOST MISTAKES CAN BE FIXED WITH A LIFT-OUT BRUSH OR SPONGE AND A BIT OF PATIENCE."**

I love the impact of *Sunlight on Grant*, the way the eye is drawn along the street to the light. I appreciate it more for all the challenges I faced, making it now one of my favorite paintings.

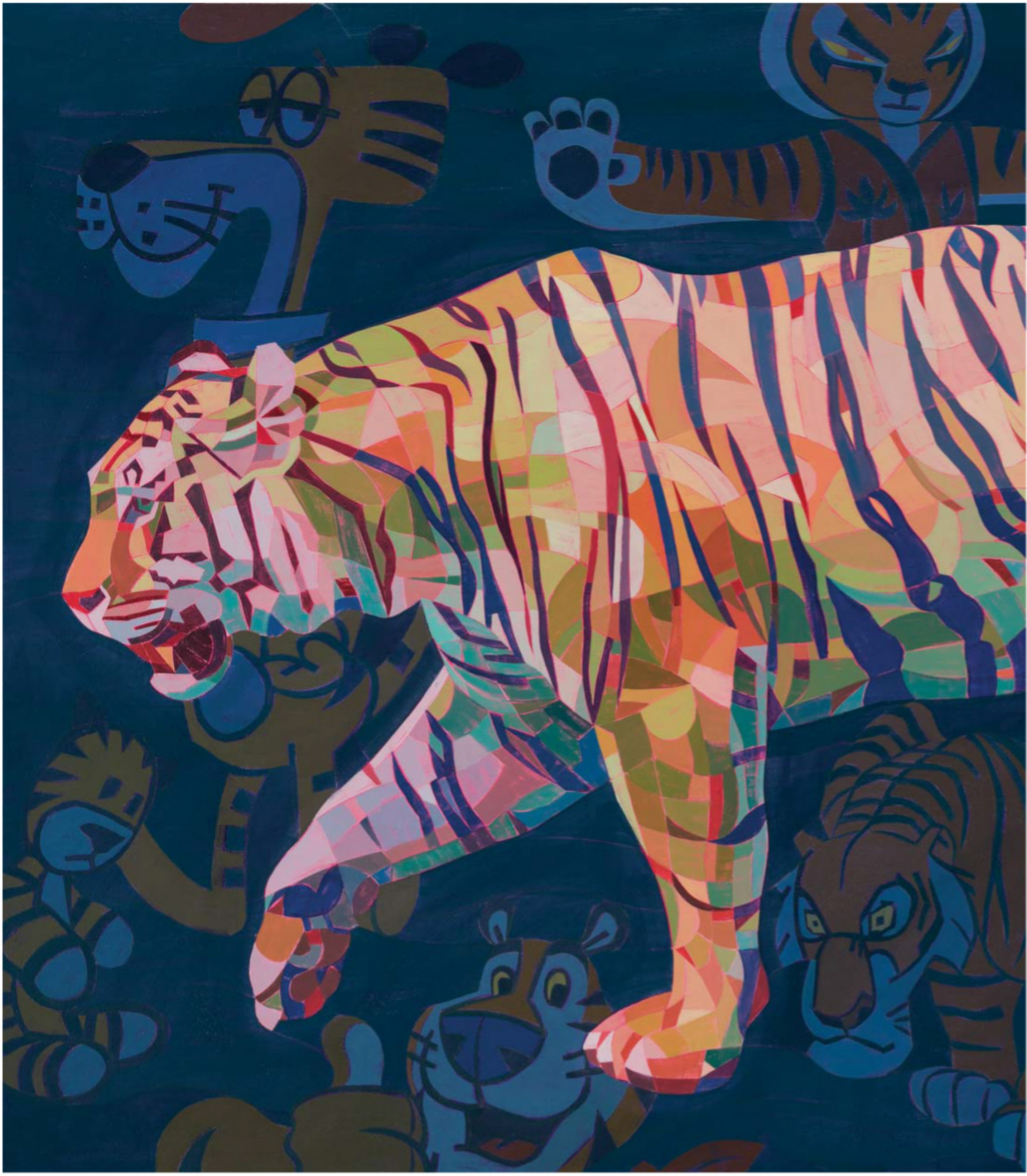
GOOD ADVICE

I think my 'a-ha' moment came while watching Anne Abgott demonstrate. I was stunned by the amount of water and paint she used. Her approach was so different from anything I'd done before. I'd never used such a large brush. Everything I learned in that lesson will stay with me forever. I keep the painting from that workshop in my studio, so that when I'm having a bad painting day, I can look at it and say to myself, "Look how far you've come. You can do this."

MY ART STORY

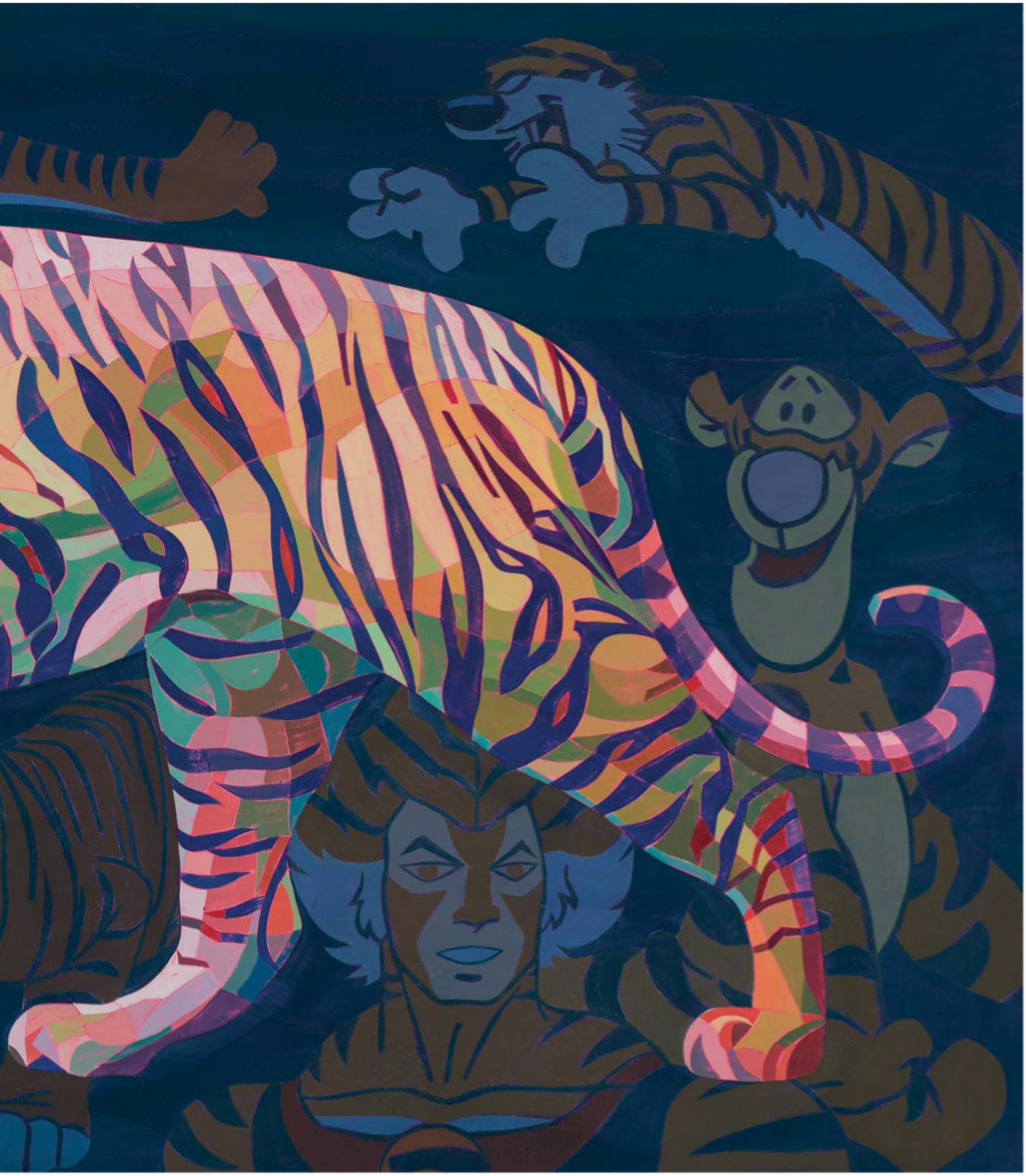
I started painting in 1995, but fell out of the habit. I tried again about 10 years later but, again, got frustrated and stopped. During a third attempt, I took a number of workshops, both in the U.K. and across the U.S. I was just about to give up once again when I took a workshop with award-winning artist Anne Abgott, and everything clicked. She has mentored me for many years since. I've since earned Signature status with several national watercolor societies, and my work has won awards in the U.K., where I was also named an SAA Amateur Artist of the Year in 2018. I'm currently teaching watercolor workshops on selected SAGA cruises traveling out of the U.K.

▶ **VISIT SUEWELSBY.COM.**



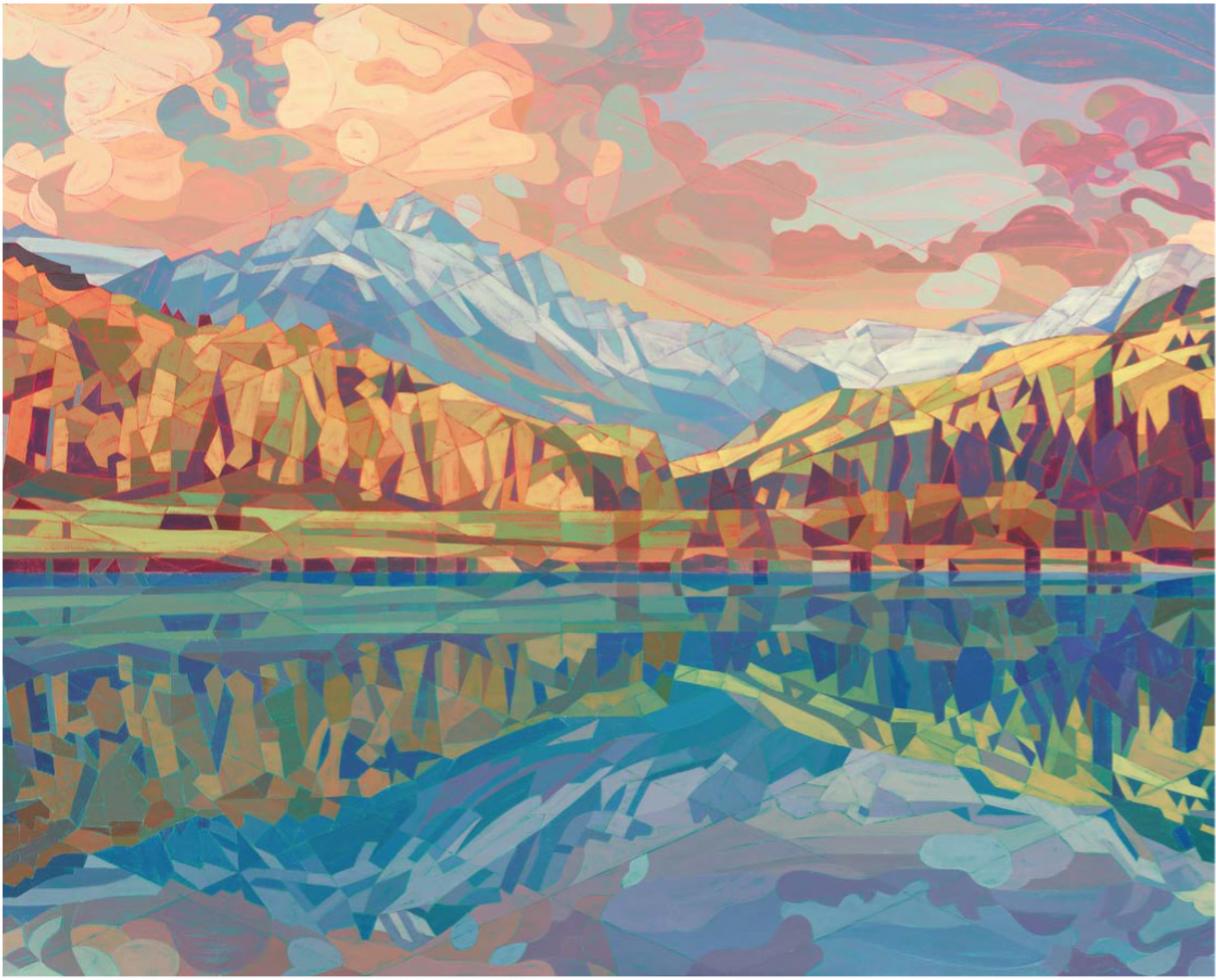
By Jenn Rein

An Ode to Color



Psyche (oil on canvas, 40x70)

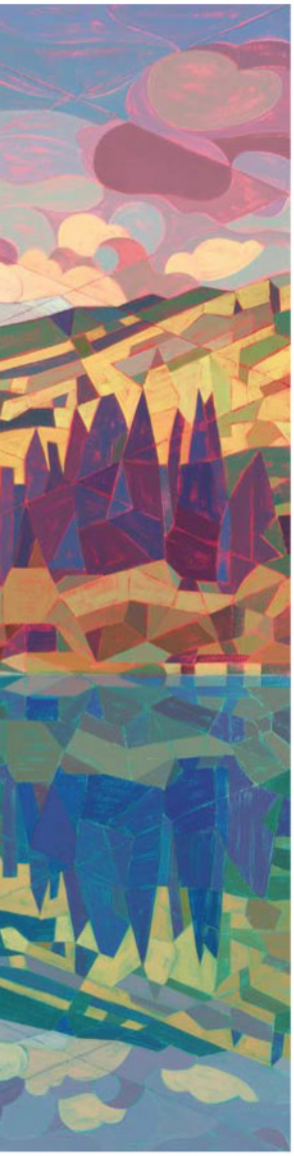
Color drives the compositions of **Lui Ferreyra** in a way that's unique to his process, with subjects deconstructed into shapes that hold the key: No one color is repeated within the geometrics of a work.



When Colorado artist Lui Ferreyra tries to identify the inception of his artistic journey, he wonders if it has to do with the encouragement he received. He had the solid support of his family, and the reactions his peers had to his talent was highly motivating. “I feel like all kids make art and all kids love art, and, for me I don’t know what the trick was,” says Ferreyra. “I was obsessive about art very early on as a kid. Once I entered the school system, I received lots of positive reactions from my peers and teachers.” This kept the young artist going, as did the willingness of his teachers to assign him special projects outside of class curriculum.

When Ferreyra says he has *always* been an artist, he doesn’t exaggerate. His early creations were made when he was but four years old. His obsession with creating set him apart from, and a little ahead of, his class. In the 5th grade, as a transplant to the United States from Mexico, he was thrilled to find that art was given a greater focus in school and treated as if it had importance. And so, his creative passion continued to thrive.

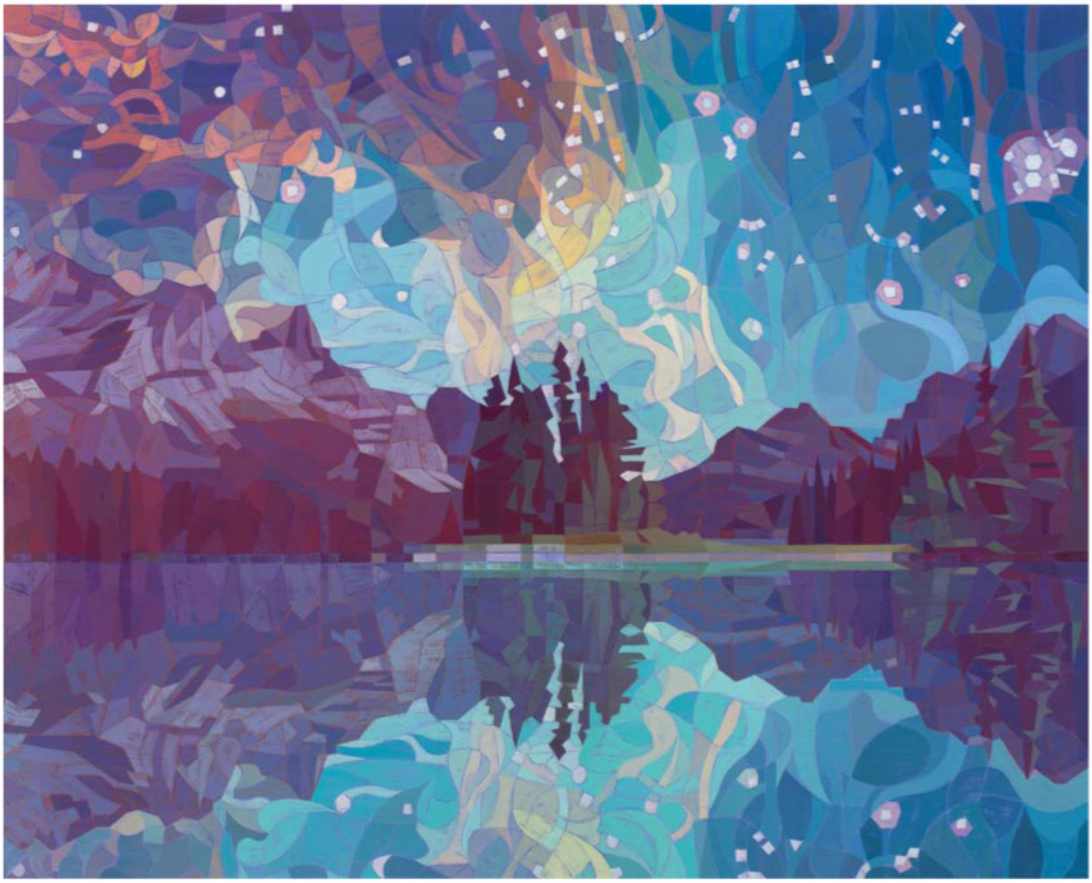
Ferreyra has now been working full time in his art practice for seven years and can see his accomplishments with more clarity. “Looking back, I don’t think I was that good,” he says. “I feel like I’m better now than I was 10 years ago.”



MEET THE ARTIST

VISIT THE ARTIST'S WEBSITE AT LUIFERREYRA.COM.

Lui Ferreyra is a Mexican-born American artist based in Denver. His work has been characterized as reviving "impressionism for a digital age." Ferreyra is known for his use of bold colors, sharp angles and soft lines to create patterns within images of animals, human figures and landscapes. He works across several media, including digital renderings, colored pencil and oil, on both canvas and paper. His paintings have been included in several prestigious shows and have garnered international attention through many print and online publications.



ABOVE
Coincidentia Oppositorum 6
(oil on canvas, 36x48)

RIGHT
Materia Prima
(oil on canvas, 48x60)

“SO MUCH OF WHAT I DO INVOLVES FINDING PLAYFUL WAYS TO MAKE ALL THE LINES FLOW WITH ONE ANOTHER—AND IT OFTEN FEELS MORE LIKE WRITING TO ME.”

OPPOSITE
Back Nude (colored pencil on paper, 12½x10)

BELOW
Cameo (colored pencil on paper, 18x18)

AN INWARD JOURNEY

Ferreyra developed a style in hyperrealism prior to his enrollment at the University of Colorado, Boulder. “At first, I was training for skill, like I didn’t really know what art was,” he says. “For a long time, I think I was trying to impress people around me. I wanted them to think, ‘This looks like a photo.’ It wasn’t until college that I started to develop more of an internal vision.”

Ferreyra’s heavy influences fly in the face of hyperrealism. He names Egon Schiele (Austrian; 1890–1918) and Alice Neel (American; 1900–84) as two artistic influences. His admiration of Schiele significantly changed his manner of seeing. “I fell in love with Egon Schiele,” Ferreyra says. “His work isn’t exaggeration for exaggeration’s sake. There’s an understanding of physicality there. What I see most is that he understands what he’s looking at. He understands the folds of the skin and how the bones interact with that. It’s so raw.”

Ferreyra’s enthusiasm for Schiele’s work also nurtured his passion for drawing. “My first love is drawing, and the hints of the shapes I work in now could be seen even then,” he says. “Once I’d graduated from college, I started to sharpen my approach. Like writing and poetry, the greatness only comes with developed skill.”

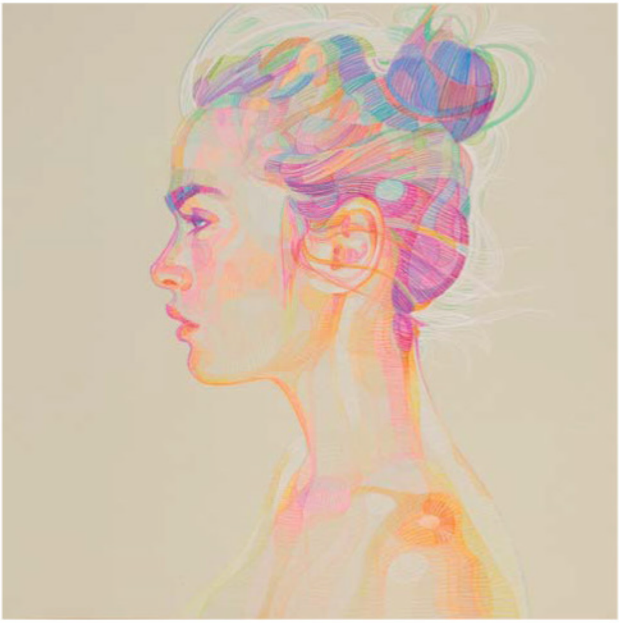
By taking on new projects to make his living, the artist stepped away from painting for a year to work as a graphic designer for a video game company. His constant exposure to that pixelated world had him thinking in geometric shapes. “It’s like when you’re in a plane and see farmland—the whole earth covered in squares—I wanted my work to look like that, but still be a recognizable image,” he says. “I decided that when I went back to painting, I’d use shapes for everything.”

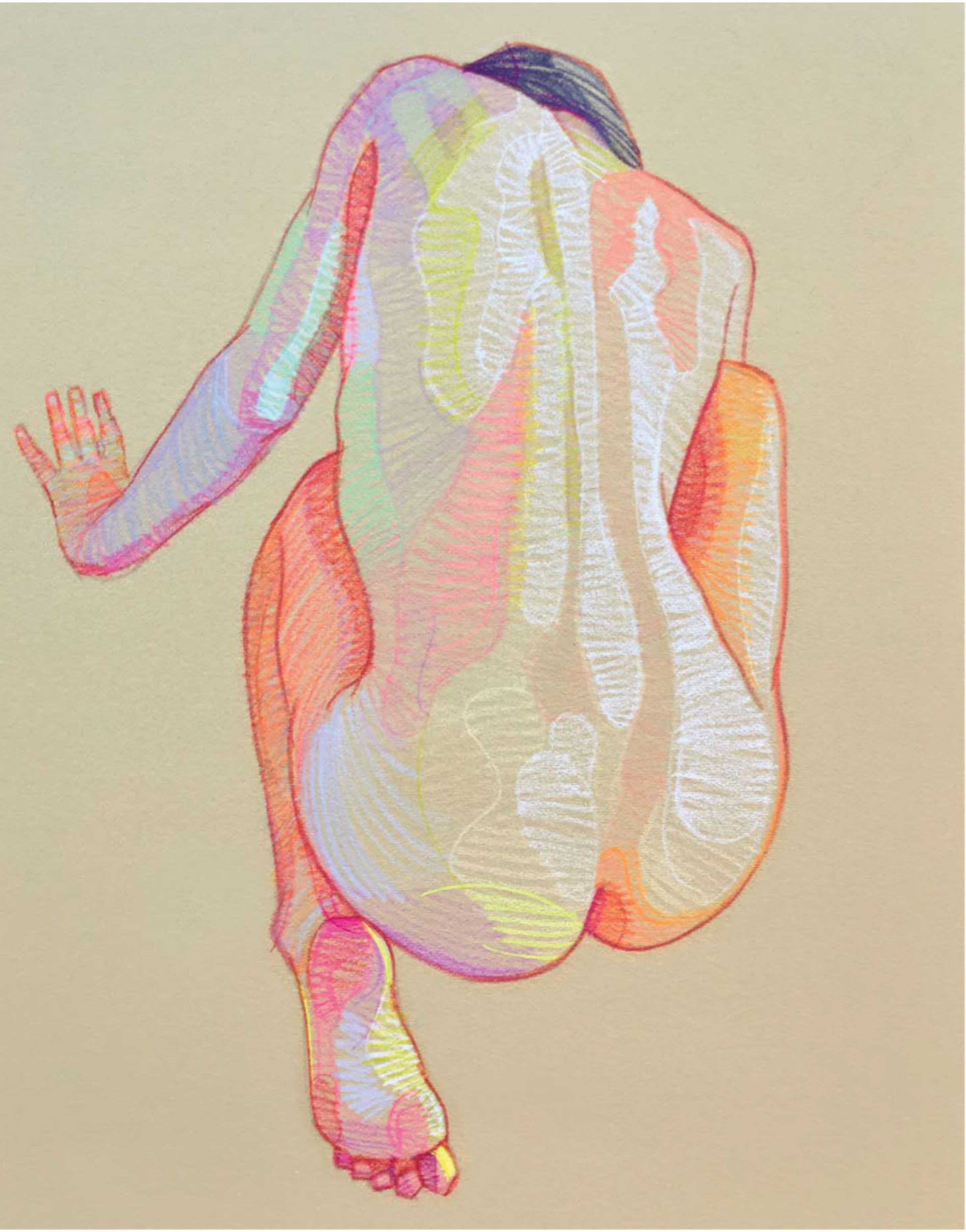
LINE BY LINE

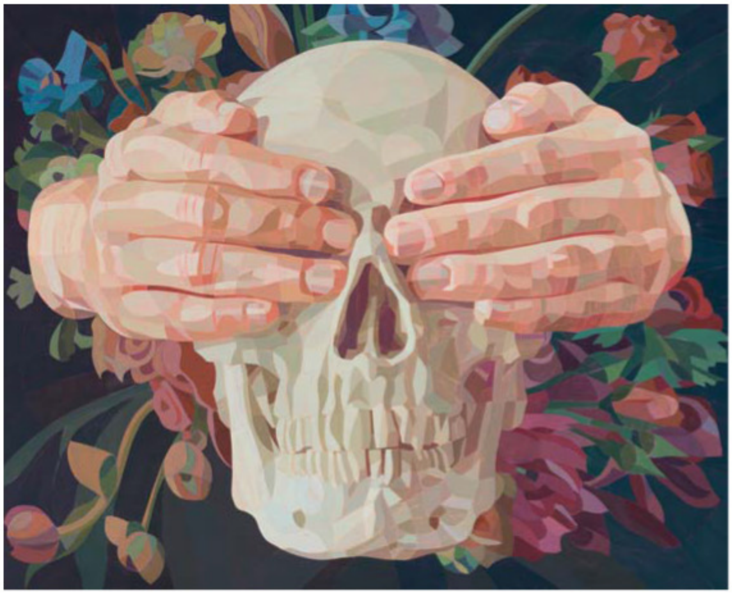
There are several ways to view a painting. Ferreyra is particularly intrigued by two avenues: First, the manner in which the eye sees a subject often has to do with seeing “through” the canvas and into the scene that’s offered. Second, the eye may linger over what occupies the body of the canvas. This could be the medium itself, or it could be something else.

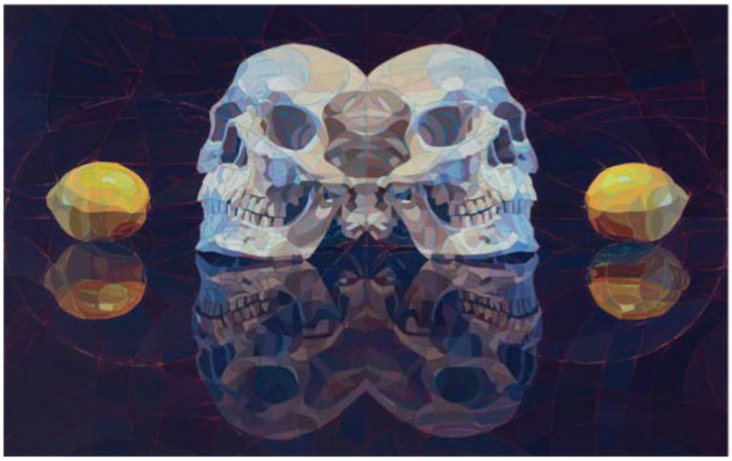
In Ferreyra’s case, it’s the shapes that comprise the whole of his composition, the lines that surround or emerge from those shapes and the color that dwells within. Each cell of color on his canvas is unique and is not repeated, and the eye is held over these. It’s easy to become so lost in the surface patterns of his work that the subject itself—whether or landscape or portrait—becomes secondary.

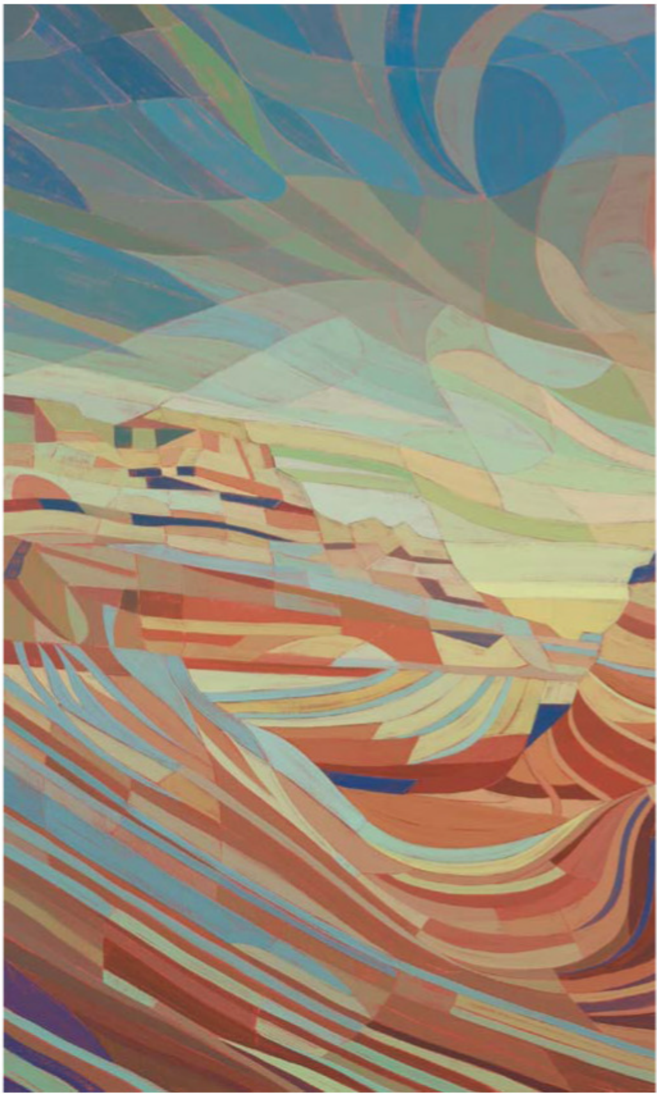
Ferreyra’s work has at times been compared to paint-by-numbers, and the artist struggled with that. “This implies it’s easy, but I like the aesthetic of paint-by-numbers,” he says. “Impressionism is specific individualized shapes—singular shapes that come together and form the image. That’s what paint-by-numbers do, and that’s what mosaic artists do, but my work looks more like vector shapes, and the implied ‘pixels’ aren’t as uniform. So much of what I do involves finding playful ways to make all the lines flow with one another—and it often feels more like writing to me.”











TOP LEFT
Life After Death (oil on canvas, 48x60)

BOTTOM LEFT
Eternal Recurrence (oil on canvas, 40x60)

FRAGMENTED IDEAS

Ferreyra first finishes a composition using Photoshop and Color Scheme as his tools. "All the colors that are going to be used are defined there," he says. The artist is creating a measured and reliable plan prior to confronting his canvas, but spontaneity does come into play in a crucial way. "The part I do spontaneously is the breakdown, which is really cutting the shapes. I do it shape by shape."

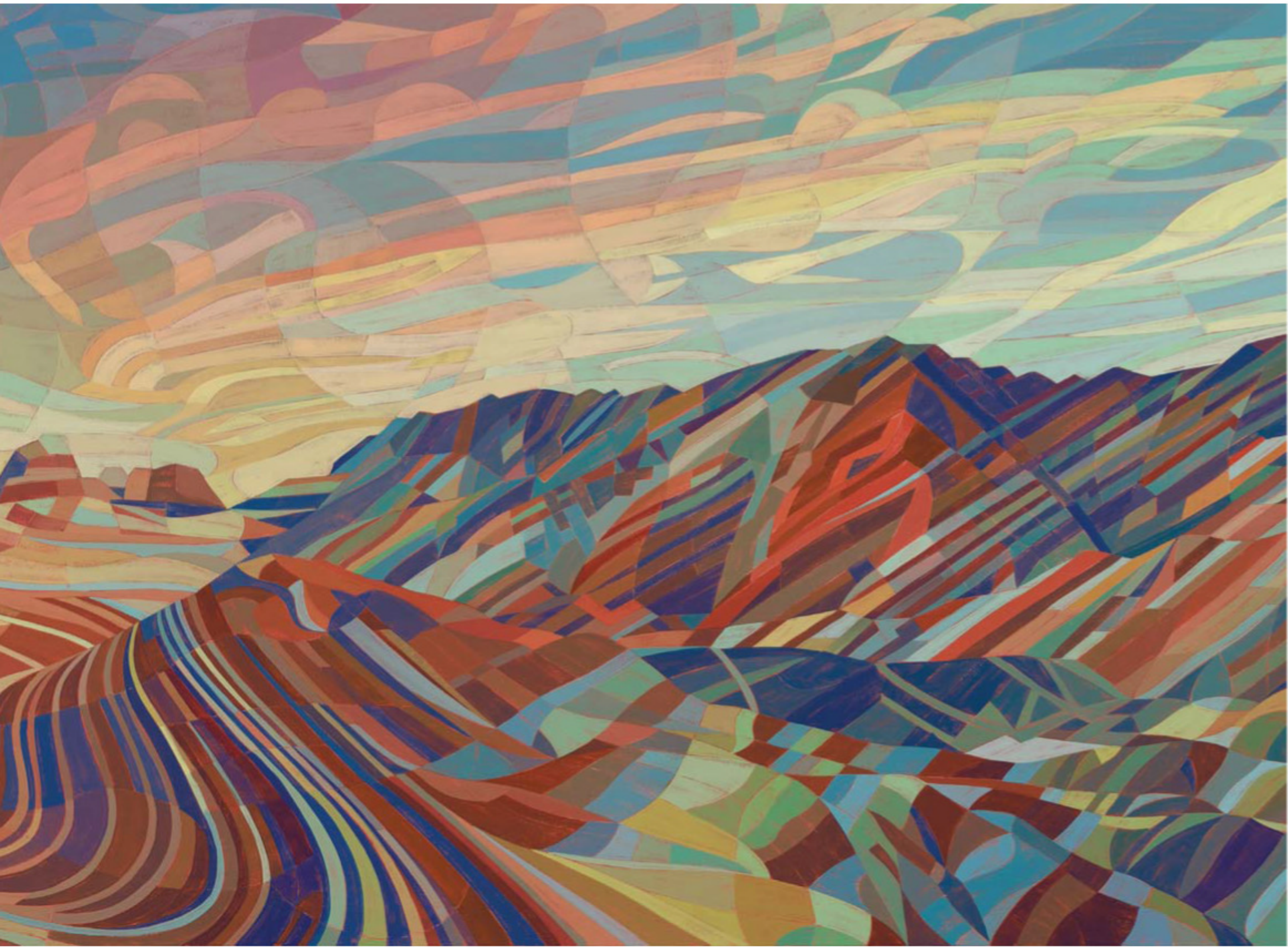
He works almost exclusively on canvas, laying down a drawing first then an acrylic underpainting. "I almost always do one flat color underneath, usually a warmish gray," he says. "Then I lay down a grid and a basic outline of the subject. If it's a face, for example, it would be just the eyes or mouth—super basic. Then I use acrylic paint to lay down a mass of color. Then I make the tiles one by one."

Ferreyra mixes the colors on his palette using the plan he established at the outset with his software. The composition study serves as the formula for his final oil piece. He'll stretch his palette to get there, with one exception: "The only color I don't use is black," says the artist. "So if there's a black in my source photo, I'll change it to deep blue or deep magenta."

When it comes to planning what to paint, Ferreyra takes a hands-off approach. "I don't like thinking of the next idea; it makes me feel stuck," he says. "I prefer to let something emerge spontaneously, like the cartoon tigers in my painting, *Psyche* (page 50–1). An idea jumps into my head and, if it won't stop bugging me, then I decide that I must paint it. I'm exploiting ideas that seem to come from nowhere."

FLUIDITY IN SUBJECT

This artist's love of drawing still feeds his creative method. He continues to grow a body of work in colored pencil. His portraits and figures in this medium lean more toward gestural rather than geometrical. Elegant lines swirl amidst striking color. (See *Cameo* and *Back Nude*, pages 54 and 55,



Concrescence (oil on canvas, 36x72)

respectively.) "Those drawings are very precise," notes Ferreyra, "as I have more facility with the pencil."

Pencil fed the work Ferreyra created as a child, and, in those years, he trained himself to understand spatial relationships. "It's all an exercise on how to transpose 'that which is' to your visual space and translate all of it onto a flat sheet of paper," he says. "All those robots and superheroes served as my training ground on how to transpose visual imagery from reality or from a photo."

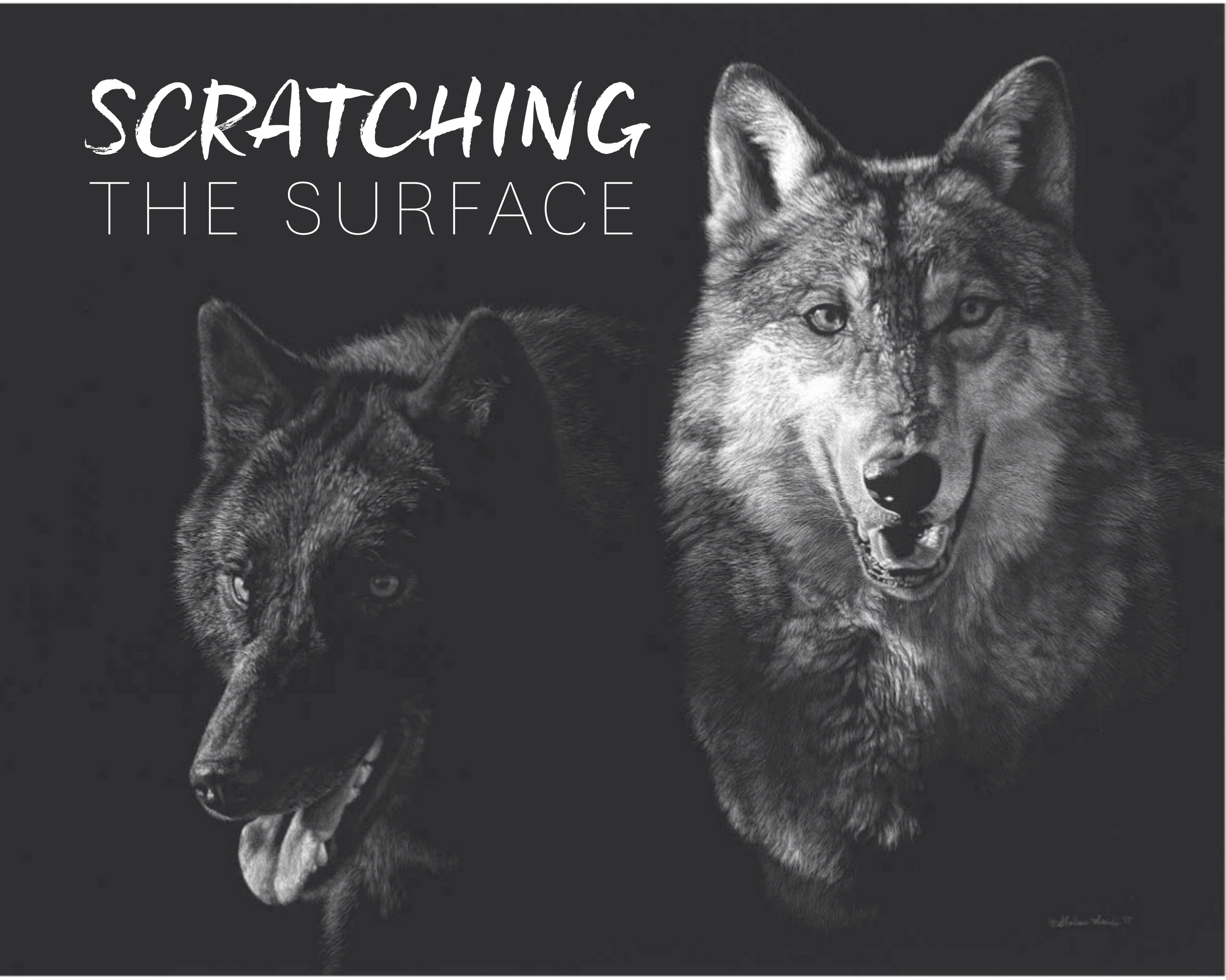
Moving from one subject to another with such adeptness helps Ferreyra to see new ways of applying line and geometric patterns to his work. "In my landscapes, such as *Coincidenta Oppositorum 6* (page 52), I started adding boundaries within the geometry of the shapes, regardless of what was going on in the source image, and I respect those boundaries," he says.

Ferreyra started to leave in a matrix as part of his compositions and, playing with how a matrix can be shaped, adding boundaries for his cells of color in an unexpected way. "One of my pieces, *Eternal Recurrence* (opposite), uses the linear boundary of the infinity symbol," he says. "I establish all these boundaries and leave a mathematical matrix rather than the spontaneous one."

In every artist's life, there are memories that shape the context of inspiration. For Ferreyra, it was moment when his father handed him a color-blind test that was essentially a field of color depicted in circles of varying shapes and shades. "He asked me if I saw it, and I didn't know what he was talking about," Ferreyra says, "but the more I looked, the more a number revealed itself to me. It blew my mind that there was information to be derived from such chaos. I feel like I'm trying to recreate that moment in my work."

Jenn Rein is a writer and editor who covers art, design, architecture and lifestyle. She makes her home in Teton Valley, Idaho, a place nestled in the wild of the Rocky Mountain West.

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE



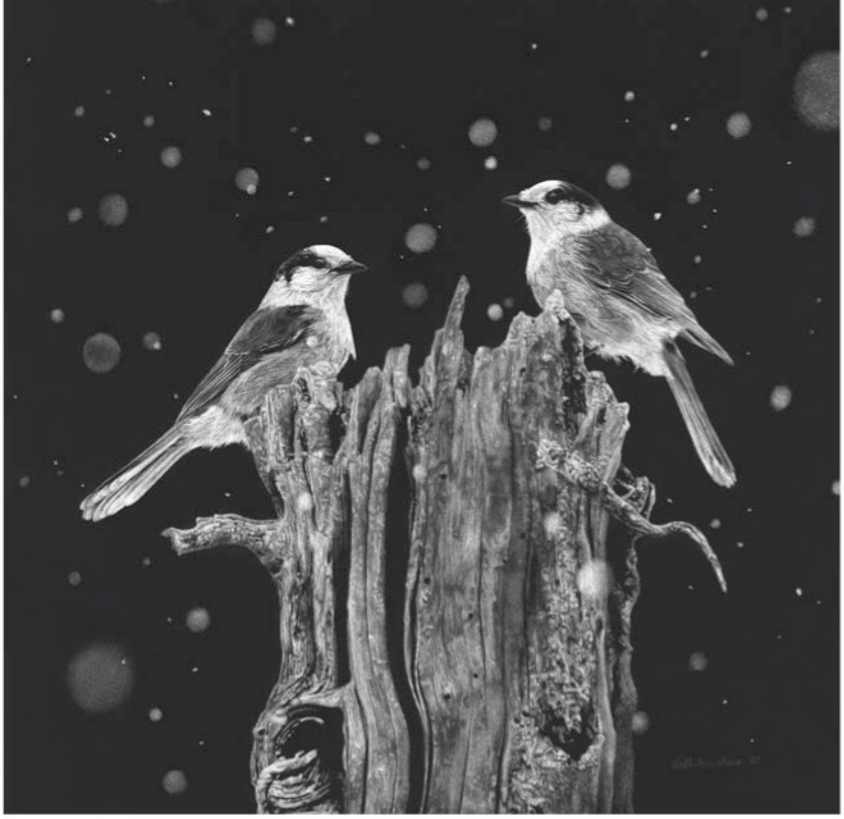
Once wildlife artist **Shalese Sands** tried her hand at scratchboard using the right materials, she quickly discovered there was no limit to the level of detail she could achieve.

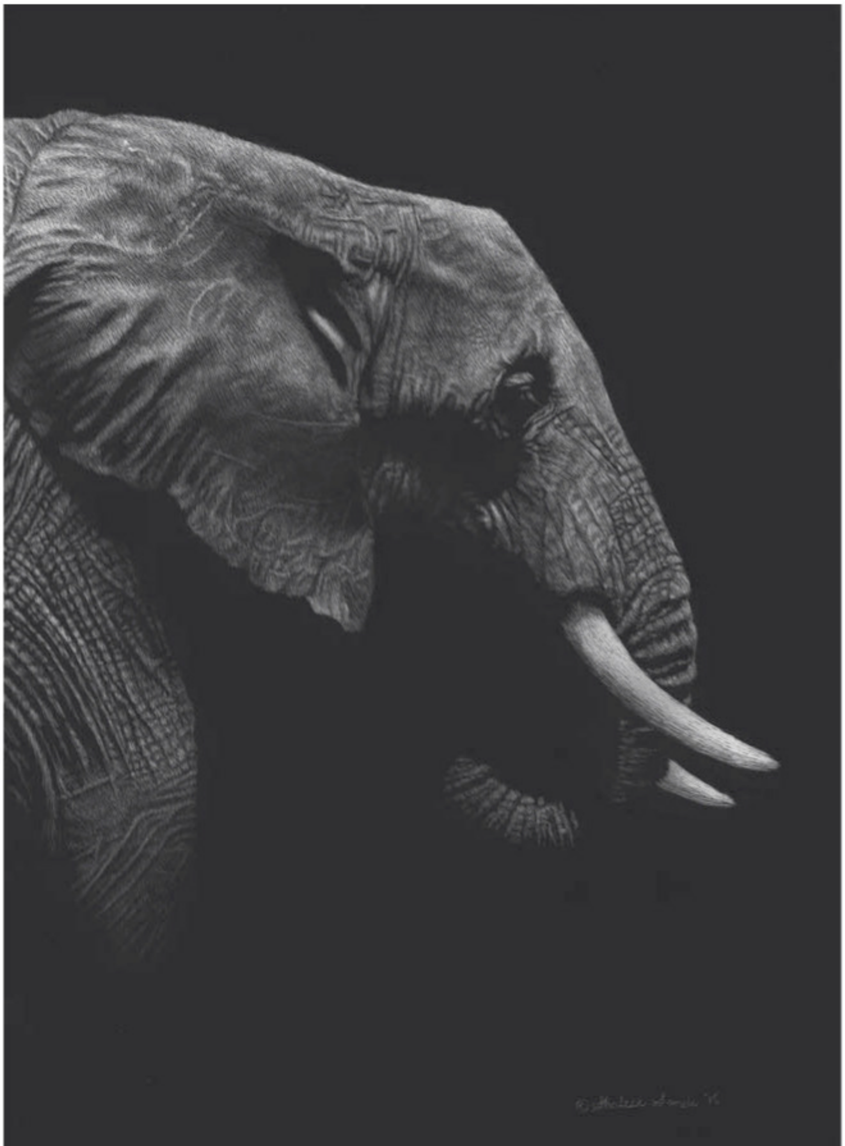
By Stefanie Laufersweiler

When Shalese Sands first experimented with scratchboard in a high school art class, she was intrigued but unimpressed. She used an X-Acto knife and nibs to mark into a layer of black ink applied over glossy cardstock paper, removing the ink to reveal lighter lines and areas. "You can only go so far before you start scratching the paper itself," she says. "It's limited what you can do with materials of that quality." Fast forward to 2013, when the artist was reintroduced to the medium in an online artist forum. The meticulously made scratchboard art being posted caught her attention. She learned that most of those artists were using a scratchboard surface by Ampersand—very thin, ⅛-inch-thick hard boards coated with a thin layer of kaolin clay. "That's the white we see in the final image; it's basically like porcelain," she says. "The black layer over that is India ink." Sands decided to purchase a few boards to try out and was hooked right away. "It cuts like butter, and the detail I could achieve was awesome," she says. "There's no paper to scratch through underneath." Getting the right materials was a game changer.

OPPOSITE
The artist combined a couple of reference photos to create **Living Shadows** (scratchboard, 11x14). "I liked the lighting on the wolves in both photos but wanted the animals to be in the same piece," she says. "I liked the idea of the wolves emerging from the shadows with dramatic light on their faces. One of the fun things about scratchboard is how you can really play with the shadows and use them to your advantage in your compositional choices."

RIGHT
Sands has found birds to be particularly challenging to photograph. "It's especially hard to capture smaller birds standing still." In **Sound of Silence** (scratchboard, 12x12), she replaced the carcass on which the birds were feeding—a moment that provided opportunity to photograph them—with a tree instead.





LEFT
African Beauty (scratchboard, 7x5) is the first Africa-inspired artwork that Sands created after her first trip to Tanzania in 2016. The artist discovered that depicting elephant skin is rather tricky. It requires patience and can't be rushed. "My method involves scratching out areas lightly at first so that they're still very dark," she says, "and then gradually adding different wrinkles and folds of skin texture in sections, lightening and layering as I go."

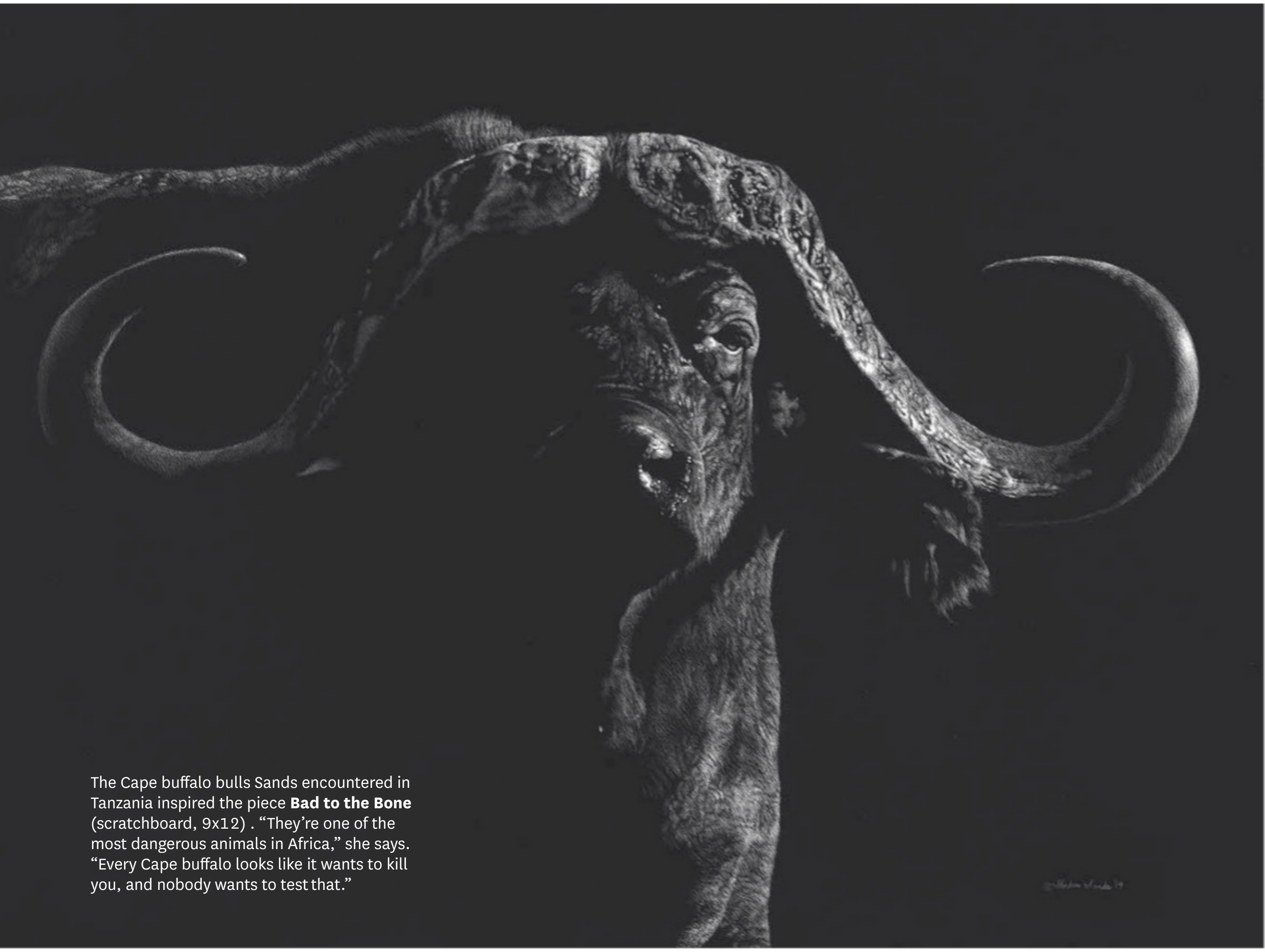
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Sands has done paintings and drawings of wildlife using more traditional media, but she has been able to achieve a higher level of realism in her scratchboard work.

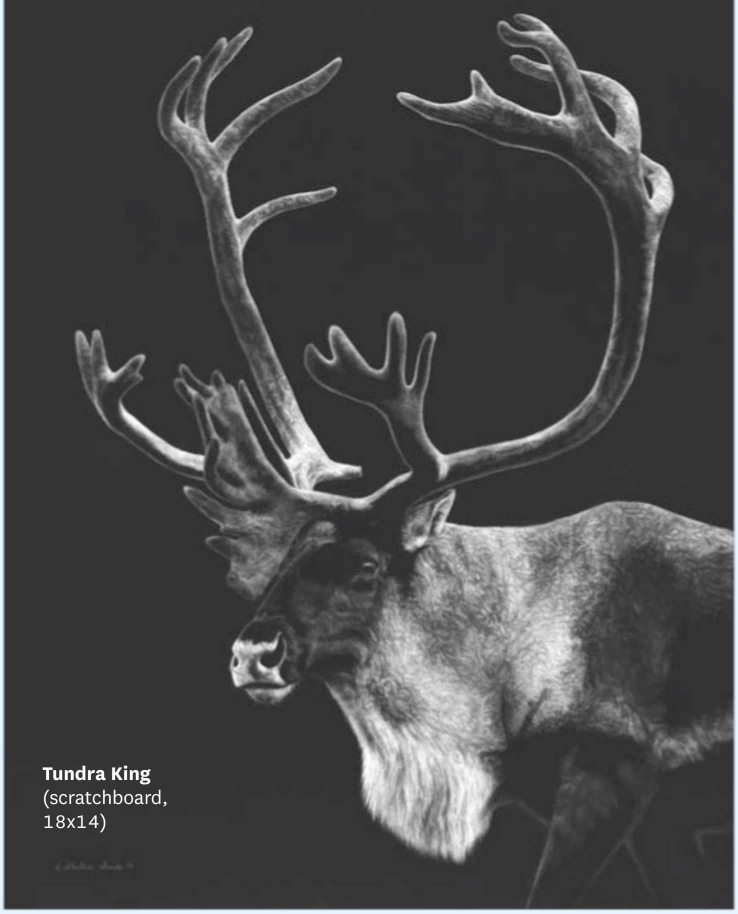
When working on scratchboard, there are several different tools one can use to lift ink, including fiberglass brushes, tattoo needles and craft knives, but Sands works almost exclusively with an X-Acto knife. "I've tried many tools but I've kept coming back to it," she says. "I really like that I can get all the textures I need, and I've learned how to use it to get all the effects that I want." Sands observes that a No. 11 X-Acto blade seems to be the preferred tool for most scratchboard artists.

In terms of the blade, the artist had been using metal ones almost exclusively before recently investing in ceramic blades, which don't wear out nearly as quickly as the metal blades. Whereas she might typically go through four metal blades to complete a single work, the same number of ceramic blades might last her an entire year.

Another benefit to a ceramic blade is that it has less "bounce" and a sturdiness that lends itself to Sands' technique of using just the tip of the blade to lift ink from the board. "When I'm trying to pick out a tiny area, if the blade bounces and flings itself a little too far, it can mess up an area I'm trying to handle delicately," she says. "A ceramic blade gives you more control—and I'm very much a control freak." Occasionally she'll use a curved scalpel to more efficiently remove larger sections of ink when she wants more white to show.



The Cape buffalo bulls Sands encountered in Tanzania inspired the piece **Bad to the Bone** (scratchboard, 9x12) . "They're one of the most dangerous animals in Africa," she says. "Every Cape buffalo looks like it wants to kill you, and nobody wants to test that."



Tundra King
(scratchboard,
18x14)

TAKE A WILD SHOT

Having good reference photography is essential for wildlife artists, and getting decent shots is challenging for even the best photographers. “It’s like hunting, only you’re using a camera instead of a gun,” says Sands. “I’ve found that, most of the time, success comes from a combination of knowing what to expect and putting yourself in the right place at the right time.”

The artist’s camera is a Canon 7D Mark II, with a 100-400mm lens. “I use a 1.4x lens extender as well, for a little more reach,” she says. “I’d like to get a mirrorless Canon R5 someday—they’re lighter, higher quality and have a greater megapixel count—but for now, this one is my workhorse.”

Sands also carries a sketchbook but rarely uses it on location. “So much happens all at once that if I try to sketch, I often miss an opportunity to capture the best reference,” she says.

Finding the animal she hopes to see, in the positions or situations she’d most like to observe, requires study. “You have to know the environment and research the daily and seasonal habits of animals,” Sands says. It can require extraordinary patience at times. The artist once waited two hours for a bull moose to stand up, because she had learned that they bed for two to three hours at a time. “You must be willing to wait for things like that,” she says. “You also learn things from experience.” She explains, for instance, that during the rut or mating season of whitetail deer, the animals will be less skittish and easier to photograph “because the bucks have the does on their mind.”

Artist Shalese Sands in Denali National Park, in Alaska, in August 2019.

Sands has two favorite places to shoot, Africa and Alaska, which provide two very different photography experiences. “In Africa, you’re going to be shooting from a Land Rover or Land Cruiser, unless your guide tells you that you can get out of the vehicle,” Sands says. “When hiking in Denali or in other areas of Alaska, however, it’s open and free range and you may be without a guide, so you have to carry your bear spray and know what to look out for. They make long lenses for a reason!”

When photographing wildlife closer to home, in Minnesota, or in similar locales, Sands doesn’t use a blind to hide herself from the local wildlife, but she does wear camouflage and avoids putting on or carrying anything scented. “Sometimes I’ll lean on or sit near a pine tree so that my natural scent is masked, and I’ll sit downwind from the animal if possible,” she says.

Learning to read an animal’s behavior is key to getting reference that captures wildlife in a natural state—and doing so safely. “In the Serengeti, the animals go about their business, because although they’re in the wild, they’re used to seeing touring vehicles,” Sands says. “Now, if you get out of the car, that’s a whole different story, because they’re not used to that. As long as you avoid activity that they’re not used to, the animals behave more naturally.”

Although she doesn’t necessarily discourage artists from using the reference of other photographers (with permission, of course), Sands believes the experience of getting your reference material firsthand is a real benefit to the artist. “The more you know about your subject, the more you’ll be able to put yourself into circumstances where you’ll have a better chance of photographing them,” she says. “That’s when you get the best experiences that feed into what you want to create.”

SELECTING A VARNISH

Finishing her completed scratchboards with spray-on varnish is a critical step that protects the sensitive surface from accidental marks once a piece of scratchwork is done, but it's also a point of stress. "Varnishing is the bane of all scratchboard artists," Sands says. "When it goes well, it looks great, but when it doesn't, all of your work and effort can be ruined."

The choice of finish is an important one. "Matte is problematic because there's a high chance of it creating a cloudy appearance that's hard to get rid of," Sands says. "Glossy is a bit too shiny for my liking." Sands' choice is Krylon UV-resistant satin varnish, because "it has a nice shine to it but it's not overbearing," she says.

BACK TO BLACK

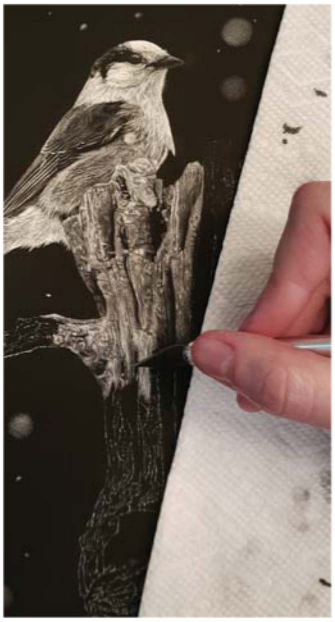
Many artists who haven't worked with scratchboard before often assume the medium affords little room for error, but that's a misconception. "Scratchboard is actually a lot more forgiving than one might think," Sands says. "The Ampersand scratchboard is a sturdy surface that can handle corrective techniques. It makes any mistakes much easier to cover up."

Sands uses an airbrush to recover areas that have been overscratched, becoming lighter than what she'd intended. It's useful for other adjustments as well. "I'll airbrush over an area that's too light to make it a little darker, or I'll just keep rebuilding the section and then rescratch those areas," she says. "If you want to work only in black, you can use basically any India ink. I use Ampersand inks, however, because that's the same ink used on their boards."

Although Sands works primarily in black, it's also possible to add color to a scratchboard (See her piece, *Walking on Water*, opposite). Some artists even use watercolor in their work. For tiny touch-ups, Sands favors Faber-Castell Pitt markers, with brush nibs. "It's like India ink, but in marker form," she explains.

TIPS & TOOLS

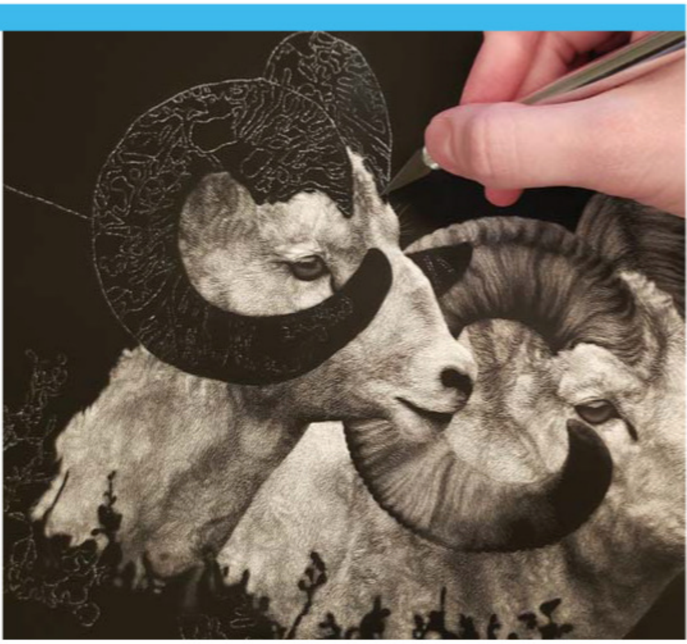
Sands offers a few helpful hints for making scratching work easier and more effective:



1. THE RIGHT GRIP

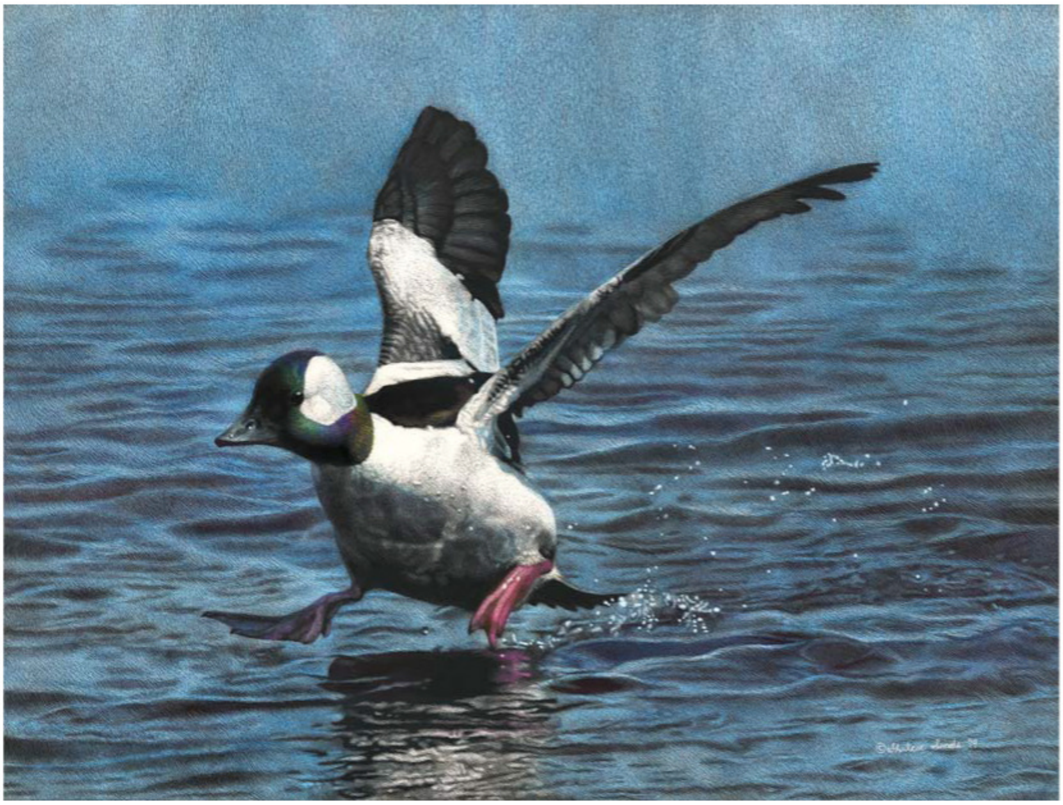
When scratching, the artist rests her hand on a paper towel to avoid smudging. "I grip the knife near the end of the holder, but I don't have a death grip on it," she says. "If I hold it just firmly enough to have control, my fingers don't get as sore, and I can use the tool for hours. You want to have a light touch anyway. Heavy-handedness won't help you achieve a nice range of values."

The artist keeps a firm but light grip on her knife.

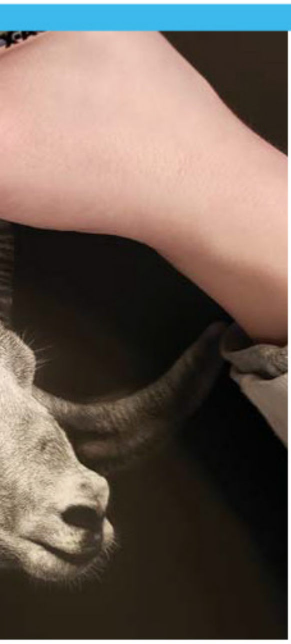


2. WORK OUT YOUR PLAN IN A DRAWING

Sands uses white Saral transfer paper to transfer her drawing to the scratchboard surface. "I work out all my mistakes first in the drawing," she says, "so by the time I transfer it to the board, everything should be exactly where it's supposed to be." She uses a slightly wet cotton



Walking on Water (scratchboard with colored inks, 9x12) was the artist's Federal Duck Stamp entry in 2019. "It was by far one of the most intense scratchboards I've ever done," Sands says. "Even though it's relatively small, almost every square inch was scratched out on this piece." After scratching the entire image, first in black and white, she brushed on very thin washes of colored ink.



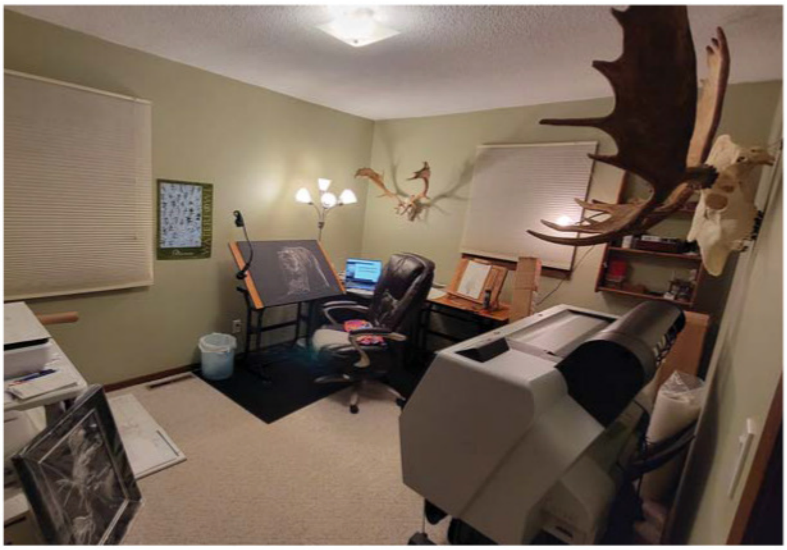
LEFT
Here, you can see the white lines of the Saral transfer paper in the sheep's horns.

RIGHT
Sands keeps two tables in her studio, so she can work on more than one thing at a time.

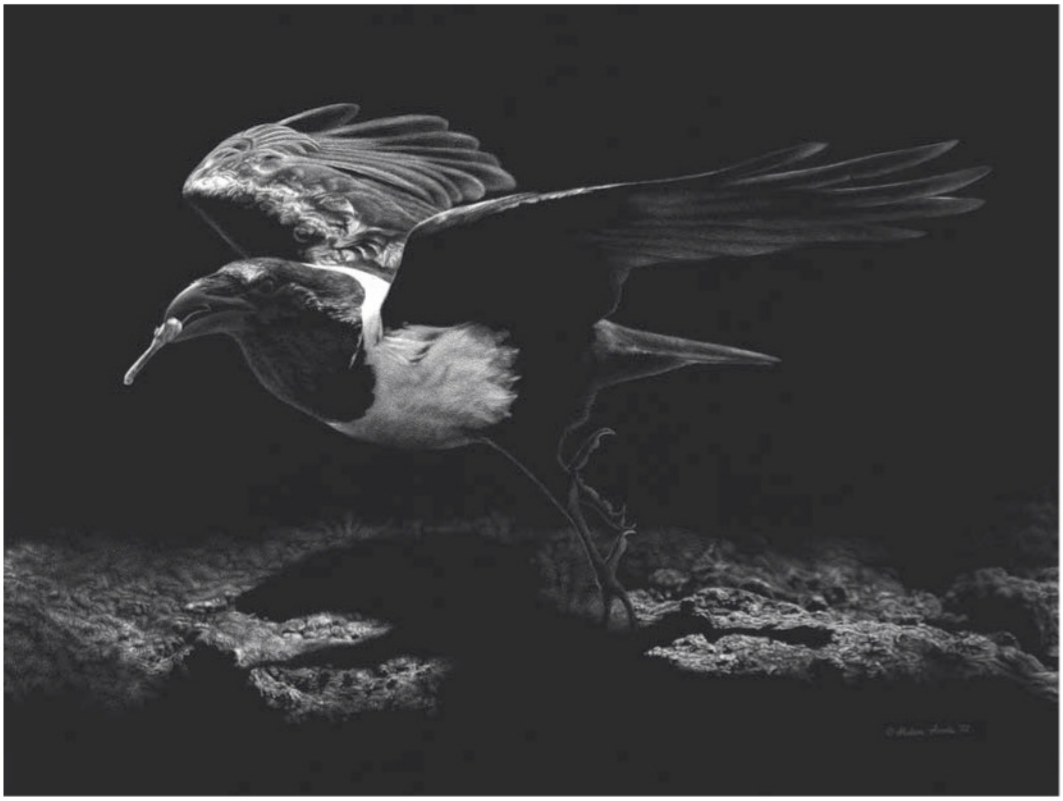
swab to rub off any white transfer lines when she's done. "You don't want to use a lot of pressure when you do the transfer," she says, "because it makes the white lines brighter and more difficult to remove."

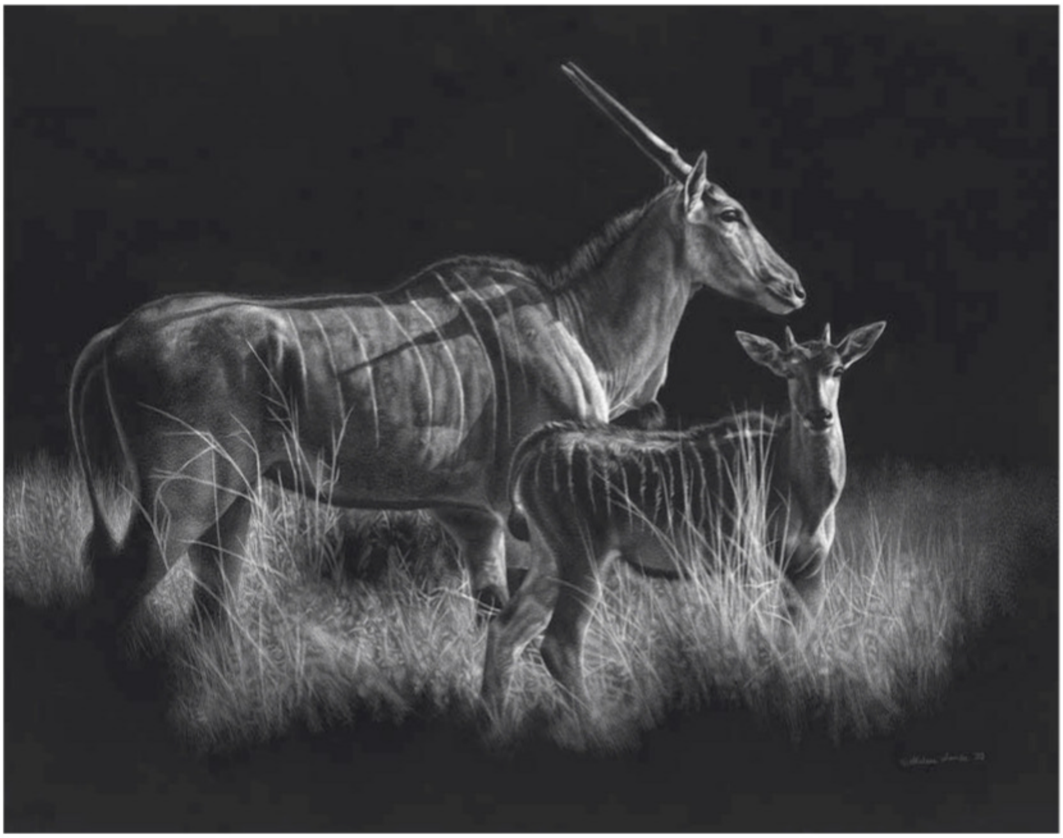
3. STUDIO SETUP

Sands, who also paints, has a designated table for each medium. "I have two drafting tables where I usually have a scratchboard and a painting in the works at the same time," she says. "The drafting tables are nice because I can change the angle depending on the needs of the piece."



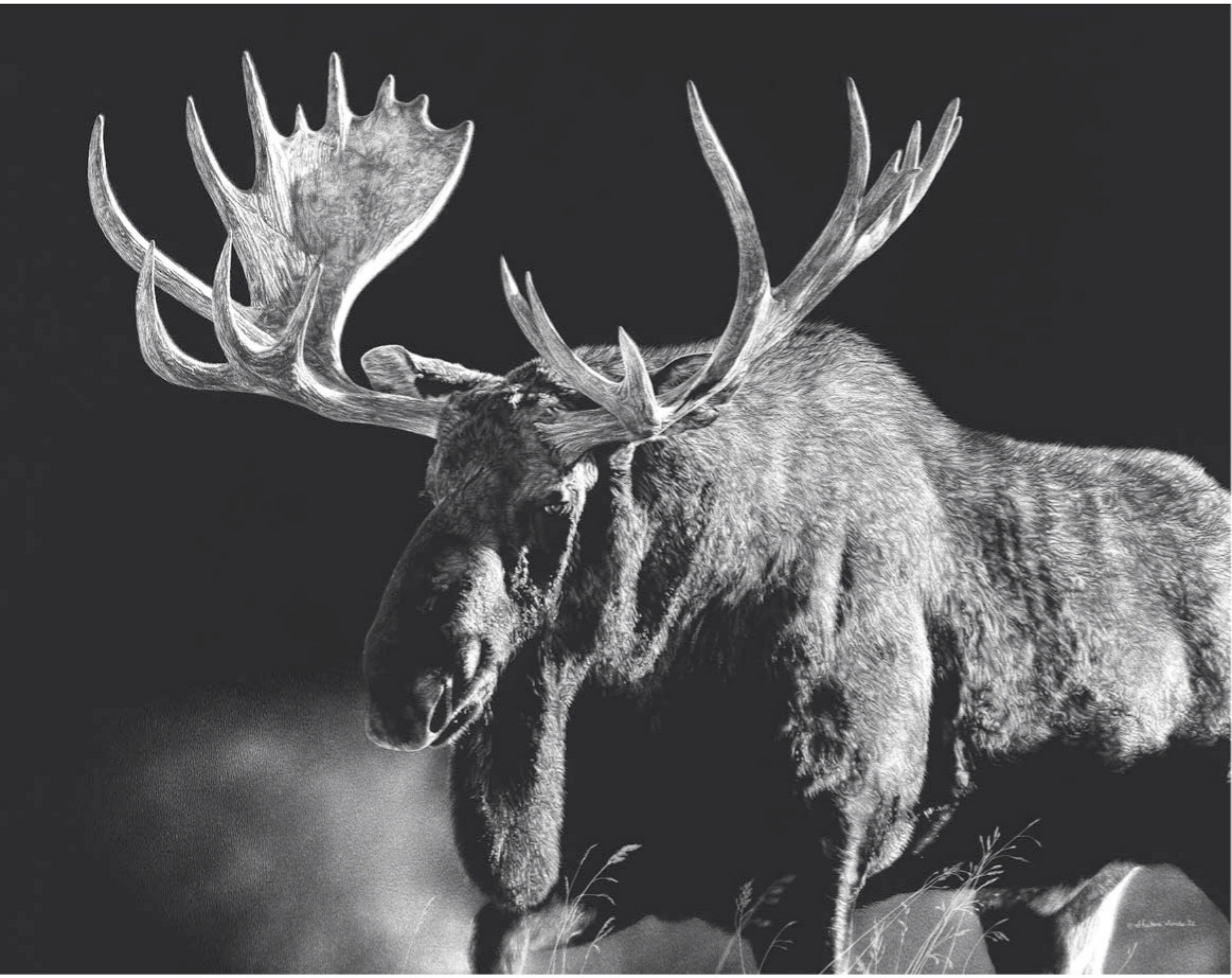
For **Lunch On the Go** (scratchboard, 9x12), Sands ended up using one photo as reference for the top half of this crow and another for the bottom half, and carefully reconstructed his shadow on the ground. “I also replaced the grass he was actually standing on with dried mud from another photo,” she says.





OPPOSITE
Moose are among the animals at the top of Sands’ list of favorites to portray. She waited two hours for the subject of **Mighty Contender** (scratchboard, 14x18) to rise from his resting spot to get the photo that inspired the piece.

LEFT
Sands prefers to suggest an animal’s surroundings, as seen in this depiction of Eland antelope in **African Light** (scratchboard, 11x14). “I’ve sometimes scratched out the entire background, but it’s so time-consuming,” she says. “A background that hints at context keeps the focus on the subject, while creating contrast that’s more powerful. I like that drama.”



THE LIGHT SHOW

In all of Sands' work, whether painting or scratchboard, what she's really after is dramatic light, particularly side lighting and backlighting. "Anyone who has traveled with me knows how obsessed I am with capturing it," she says. "Muted and diffused lighting has softer effects that can be just as powerful, but I gravitate toward the more visually dramatic."

The artist found a phrase she'd written down in a sketchbook: "Evoking the sublime through the power of light." She feels these words represent the epitome of her art. "Especially with scratchboard—what you're doing is showing light. You're carving out the light in a piece," she says. "It's all about the light."

Stefanie Laufersweiler is a freelance writer and editor living in Cincinnati, who has been writing about art and artists for many years.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ARTIST AT SHALESESANDS.COM.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE ART OF SCRATCHBOARD AT SCRATCHBOARDSOCIETY.ORG.

A World in THE PALM OF Your Hands

Dina Brodsky captures stirring landscapes in a pocket-sized format.

By Ani Kodjabasheva

While studying abroad in Amsterdam, Dina Brodsky lived in an abandoned building without any heat. She spent a lot of time at the Rijksmuseum, drawn to both the art and the warmth. For two or three months, she went there every day. Her "first love" was the 17th-century Dutch still lifes, with their brightly colored fruit and gleaming vessels. After that, she was drawn to the Netherlandish van Eyck brothers (Jan, 1390–1441, and Hubert, 1370–1426) and their obsession with precise detail. "They were less into harmony than into going all the way to the end of something—to that last pearl. It's a perfect pearl or a perfect mirror," she says.

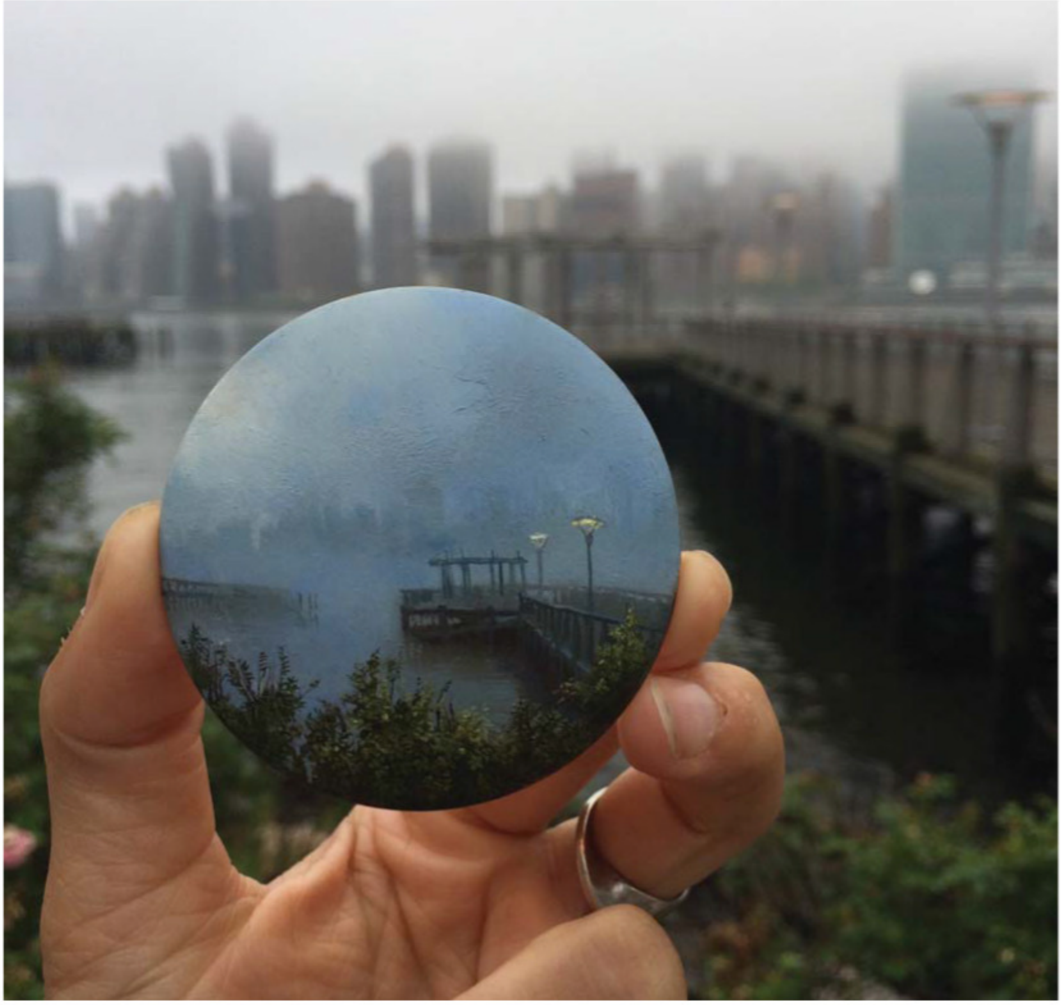
Rembrandt's monumental painting *The Night Watch* (about 12x14 feet), on the other hand, didn't resonate with Brodsky. "It's just so big that I'm overwhelmed by it," she says. The painting is almost life-size, and the figures are positioned to look as if they might step out of the picture plane, but Brodsky was unable to enter that fictional space. "Artwork affects me more when it's small," she says, "when I can take in the whole thing rather than having to stand back."

TOTAL IMMERSION

Here's the paradox: Rather than creating a convincing illusion that draws in a viewer, paintings close to life-size are perceived as images of something outside the viewer's world. No matter how realistic those images are, a viewer clearly juxtaposes them as separate entities within real-life physical space. In other words, there remains an acknowledged difference between the viewer's world and the image-world.

Miniatures, on the other hand, don't demand comparison; instead, they demand immersion into a world of their own with its own scale and space. The difference is similar to that between overhearing a conversation, aware you're only a spectator, and being lost in a book or a dream in which the story feels like your own.

OPPOSITE
From **Cycling Guide to Lilliput series** (oil on copper, 2½-inches diameter each): first row, left to right: **No. 52**, **No. 55**, **No. 97**; second row, left to right: **No. 99**, **No. 98**, **No. 96**; third row, left to right: **No. 89**, **No. 88**, **No. 81**; fourth row, left to right: **No. 71**, **No. 59**, **No. 100**



Brodsky holds her piece, **No. 53** (**Cycling Guide to Lilliput series**; oil on copper, 2½ inches diameter) against the real-world scene upon which it's based.

MAKING MINIATURES

Brodsky clearly prefers the immersive experience. She has been fond of small things since she was a child, and as an adult, she has gathered a substantial following on social media by showing her palm-sized miniatures and her process for creating them. These paintings take the viewer to all kinds of scenes: golden sunsets and sunrises; ocean shores; woodland groves; unpeopled paths, walks and lanes; and so much more (see the above photo and images on pages 66 and 70).

Each of the landscapes is part of a miniature series *Cycling Guide to Lilliput*. A long-distance cycler since age 18, Brodsky finds that bicycling is her preferred mode of travel, and she has enjoyed several cycling sojourns in Europe. Combining two of her interests, the artist records special memories of her travels in this series of tiny paintings, which measure a mere 2½ inches in diameter.

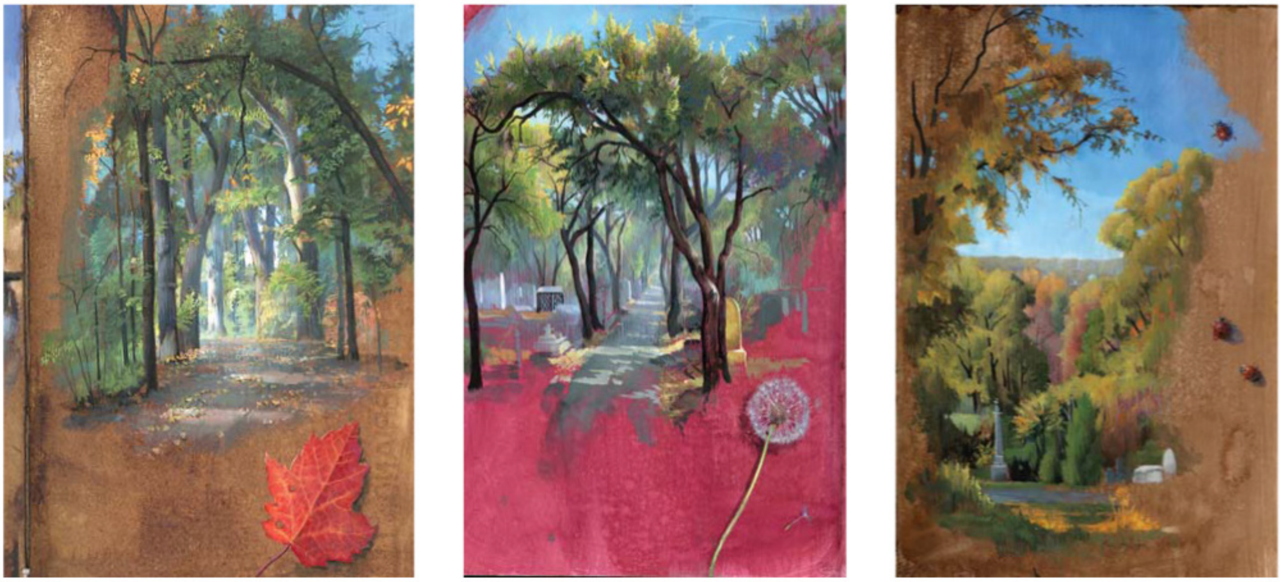
"When painting miniatures, I have the feeling I'm totally in the space of the painting," says Brodsky. "I sit down to work, and when I get up six hours later, I feel like I'm cut off—as if I'm dipping out of the miniature world into the real world, but my home is where the miniatures are."

To create those little portals to other places, the artist draws the composition directly on the surface—either copper plate or mylar. She then tones the surface with acrylic and lets it dry. After that, she begins building up layers of oil paint, followed by glazing. She then paints the finer details and reglazes, applying as many as 10 layers as she deepens the color and develops the details.

Making miniatures is an accessible artistic practice in the sense that it doesn't take much physical space—certainly not a full studio. Brodsky points out that she can create these pieces while sitting on the corner of her couch—and that an entire "museum" for miniatures could fit into a structure about the size of a cabinet.

“ARTWORK AFFECTS ME MORE WHEN IT’S SMALL, WHEN I CAN TAKE IN THE WHOLE THING RATHER THAN HAVING TO STAND BACK.”

—DINA BRODSKY



LEFT TO RIGHT
Jamaica Pond (Emerald Necklace Conservancy, Boston; gouache, watercolor and ballpoint pen on journal page, 11x9)

Cemetery (Mexico; gouache, watercolor and ballpoint pen on journal page, 11x9)

Mt. Auburn, (gouache, watercolor and ballpoint pen on journal page, 11x9)

BOOKS AS ART

Before studying art, books were the main outlet for Brodsky’s imagination. Although she had little interest in schoolwork, she lost herself in fiction. Illuminated manuscripts from Christian and Islamic traditions are another literary art form that has long fascinated her. The artist marvels at the details and idiosyncrasies of these pages that invite close examination.

Brodsky remarks that developing a full appreciation for such tactile, intricate work can be difficult in today’s world. She points out that most people can’t even get a proper look at the manuscripts. “You see one page of the book in a museum, and you don’t see anything else,” she says. “That one page is a work for which someone spent an insane amount of time and skill—but imagine being able to leaf through all the pages of those books. Every single page is a work of art.” These books were treasures to their readers—objects with which they had a personal relationship. Like Brodsky’s miniatures, they invite prolonged contemplation.

In a similar vein, Brodsky’s sketchbooks, which she has kept since her college days as a means of recording her life’s itinerary, encourage the lingering gaze. Like an enchanted storybook, her recent sketchbook pages take the viewer along forested paths of collected memories. She paints a scene and then, giving small things their due, picks out a specific object for study. A trompe-l’oeil dandelion or leaf stands out as if it’s an actual herbarium specimen placed on top of a painted landscape (see *Jamaica Pond*, above left, and *Cemetery*, above middle). In another sketchbook, trompe-l’oeil ladybugs with unbelievably glossy, sturdy wings crawl across the paper and over the painted sky of an underlying scene (See *Mt. Auburn*, above right.)

“It’s funny,” says Brodsky, “I think we don’t change that much from the time we’re young. I’ve always liked books, and I’ve always liked small things. The fun part of being an adult is that I actually get to make the stuff that I used to just look at.”

CHALLENGES OF GOING SMALL

Asked whether she'd recommend other artists try working on a smaller scale, Brodsky hesitates and acknowledges there are drawbacks. "Galleries don't like small paintings," says Brodsky. "Artists would spend a lot of time learning something impractical for which there's a very limited market."

The artist points out that contemporary galleries haven't necessarily been enthusiastic about showing her work, and some have even asked whether she could do similar paintings—but bigger. "The way we're taught now is that if it's bigger, it's better because it can sell for a lot more money," she says.

There are alternatives, however, to galleries. Not finding a rewarding place for herself in the contemporary art world of New York City, where she has been based for most of her career, Brodsky discovered she could get an audience and support somewhere else—on social media.

Instagram turned out to be a suitable platform that advanced Brodsky's career. Seeing her paintings on pocket-sized phone screens enabled viewers to experience a more personalized, even tactile, relationship with the art. In an episode of the podcast *Create!*, Brodsky explains that visits to artists' social media pages resemble studio visits: They're opportunities to learn about artists' processes and get glimpses of their everyday life. This relationship allows web viewers a chance not only to enter Brodsky's real world, but also the worlds of her miniatures. She now has more than 730,000 followers on Instagram.

PAINT ANYWAY

In spite of the challenges, Brodsky feels there's an argument for following your own course regardless of current trends. In the 2010s, she and a group of friends in New York formed a small art movement called "Paint Anyway." They set their own standards of art-making in order to differentiate themselves from what they were seeing in the Chelsea galleries. The movement had one principle: to make art that's both skilled and heartfelt—to do what feels true to you and to "paint anyway."

"We felt that a lot of what was going on at the time was very ironic or not in earnest—and much of it wasn't skilled, either," says Brodsky. "For us, making something good, as well as having an intent or an idea behind it, was important. Artists should mean what they're doing and not be embarrassed about having feelings—not need to be ironic."

The group wanted to organize shows in various places. "We were trying to create our own art world because we couldn't find a space in the established one," Brodsky says. The movement has mainly brought about personal growth rather than broader changes; however, Brodsky says that she's now seeing more openness and variety in contemporary galleries—more of the kind of work she values.

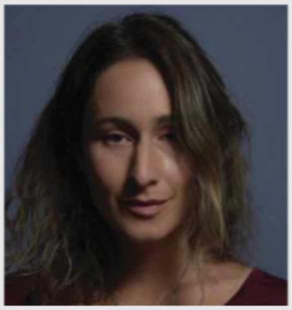
THE DREAM SPACE

In an effort to raise awareness and acceptance of miniature art, Brodsky has teamed with artist Lorraine Loots, a miniaturist from South Africa, on a project to create a "miniature museum"—a small structure in a public space in New York where miniaturists can exhibit their work to a wide audience. Instead letting their work get lost in a space meant for showing big work, they could display their work in a smaller space meant for showing exactly the kind of work miniaturists make.

With her verve and drive to create new realities, Brodsky says, "If it doesn't exist, let's make it."

Ani Kodjabasheva is a writer living in Sofia, Bulgaria.

MEET THE ARTIST



Dina Brodsky studied at the Amsterdam Academy of Arts, in the Netherlands, and went on to receive a BFA from the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst, and an MFA from the New York Academy of Art, in New York City. In addition to her own workshops, she has taught at several institutions, including Castle Hill Center for the Arts, in Cape Cod; the Long Island Academy of Fine Art; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Brodsky has exhibited her work in London and across the United States.

VISIT BRODSKY'S WEBSITE AT DINABRODSKY.COM AND HER INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT @DINABRODSKY.

OPPOSITE
From the **Cycling Guide to Lilliput series** (oil on copper, 2½-inches diameter each): first row, left to right: **No. 69**, **No. 68**, **No. 86**; second row, left to right: **No. 56**, **No. 57**, **No. 83**; third row, left to right: **No. 95**, **No. 65**, **No. 53**; fourth row, left to right: **No. 63**, **No. 94**, **No. 79**

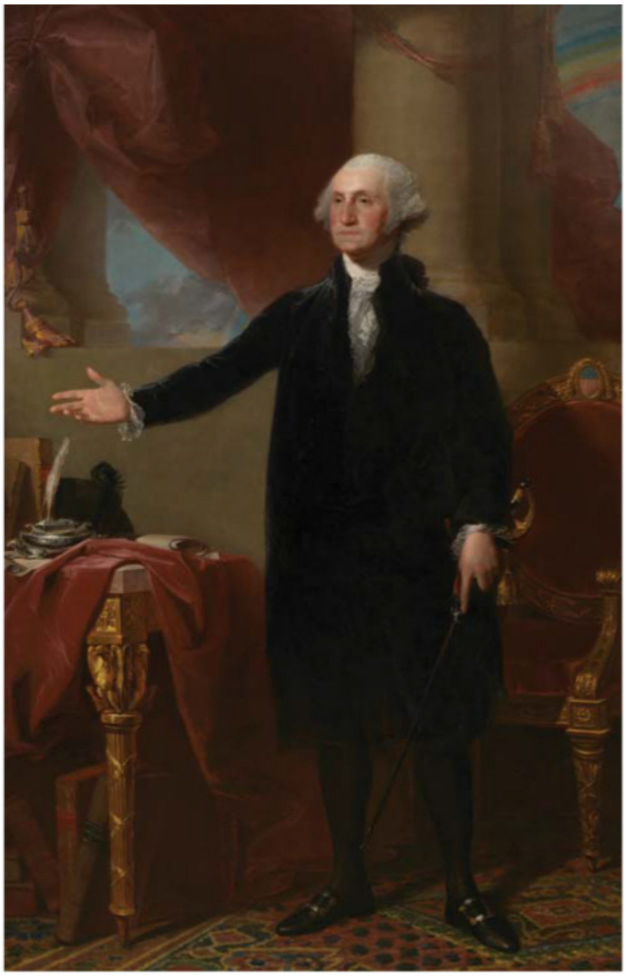
America's Presidents

A historical retrospective in two and three dimensions.

By Cynthia Close

Rhode Island-born artist Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828) captured America's first President, George Washington, in oil on canvas, in 1796, creating a precedent for the commissioning of official presidential portraiture that has endured to this day. Although Washington was reported to be a reluctant portrait-sitter, Stuart managed to paint his initial portrait from life. Known as *The Lansdowne Portrait* (right), it features a full-length figure of Washington, standing in an elaborate, European-inspired interior setting. Given the positive response and subsequent demand for an image of the president, the entrepreneurial Stuart made more than 100 versions of the original canvas for his eager patrons in America and Europe.

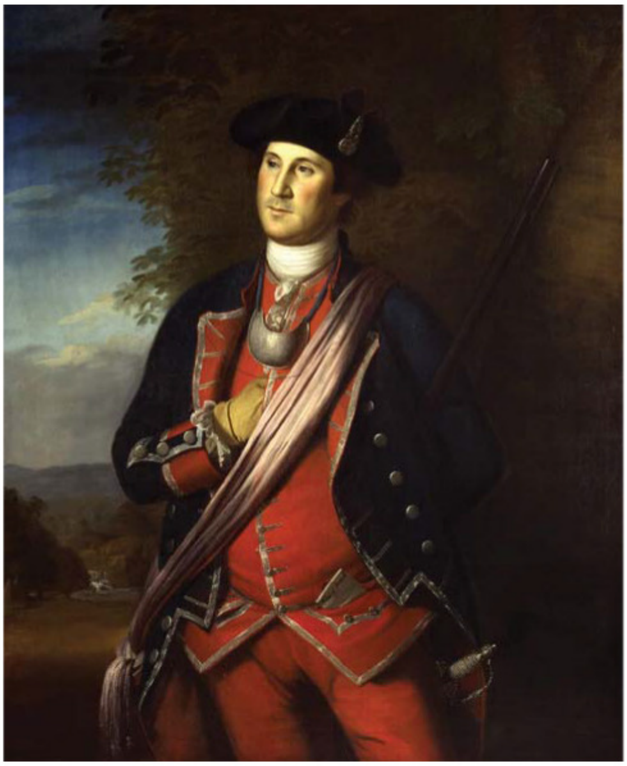
Many other artists, national and international, painted portraits of George Washington. Some of them were commissioned by his wife Martha, such as the youthful image portrayed in *George Washington as Colonel in the Virginia Regiment* (page 74) by Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827).

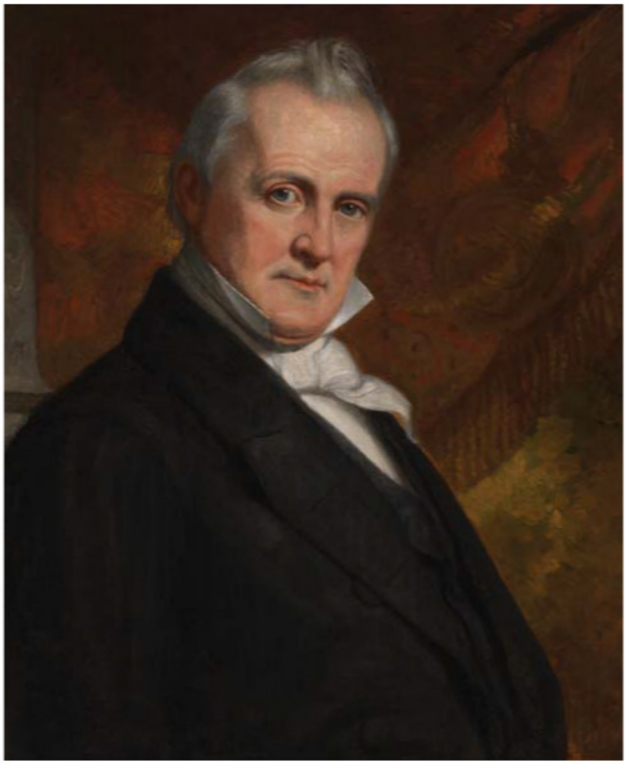


George Washington (The Landsdowne Portrait) (ca 1796; oil on canvas, 97½x62½) by Gilbert Stuart

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; ACQUIRED AS A GIFT TO THE NATION THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF THE DONALD W. REYNOLDS FOUNDATION

OPPOSITE
Former U.S. President Barack Obama and artist Kehinde Wiley unveil Obama's portrait (oil on canvas, 94¾x66) at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/MARK WILSON





LEFT TO RIGHT
George Washington as Colonel in the Virginia Regiment (ca 1772; oil on canvas, 50½x40½) by Charles Willson Peale

WASHINGTON-CUSTIS-LEE COLLECTION, WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY, LEXINGTON VA U1897.1.1

James Buchanan (ca 1859; oil on canvas, 30x25) by George Peter Alexander Healy

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; GIFT FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART (MUSEUM PURCHASE, GALLERY FUND). NPG.2019.18

OPPOSITE
Abraham Lincoln (ca 1887; oil on canvas, 74x54) by George Peter Alexander Healy

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; TRANSFER FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART; GIFT OF THE A.W. MELLON EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE TRUST, 1942. NPG.65.50

THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Along with Stuart's portraits of Washington, Peale's interpretations are also on view at the National Portrait Gallery, the nation's only complete collection of presidential portraits outside the White House. There are two sets of presidential portraits. One set is retained for public display at the White House, the other becomes part of the collection at the National Portrait Gallery, officially founded by Congress in 1962 under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. The National Portrait Gallery's collection is broad, going beyond the presidents to include artists, politicians, scientists, inventors, activists and performers—those individuals who most contributed to forming the country's national identity. The heart of the collection, however, is the exhibition "America's Presidents."

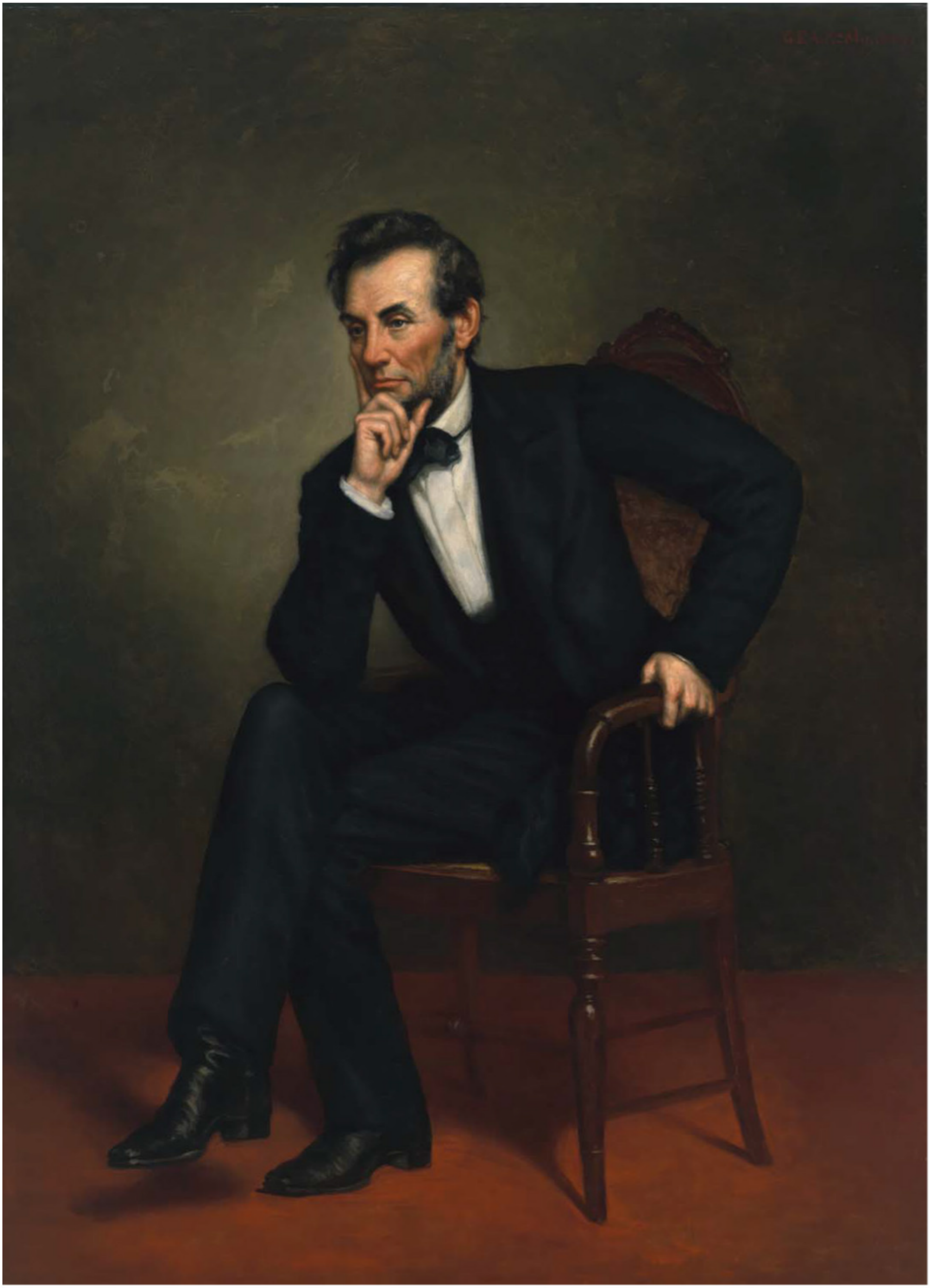
Although every president since Washington is represented, the National Portrait Gallery only started to directly commission work in the 1990s, beginning with George H.W. Bush who was painted in 1995 by Ronald Sherr (1952–), an artist known for his skillful portraits of American politicians and business people. Sherr's historic double-portrait of father and son Presidents 41 and 43, hangs at the George H.W. Bush Library in College Station Texas. Since then, every president has had some say in the artist chosen to paint them and on how they ultimately would be presented.

THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

For nearly 100 years, those first presidential portraits, although painted by different artists, appeared to follow a prescribed, almost generic formula. The formal works featured unsmiling, subjects from John Adams (No. 2) to James Buchanan (No. 15) in a head-and-shoulders or three-quarter view, usually wearing a black suit-coat with a white, high collared shirt and black tie, set against a simple, dark or neutral umber background.

The portrait (opposite) of Abraham Lincoln (No. 16) by George Peter Alexander Healy (1813–94) shows the first major diversion of composition and style in presidential paintings. Healy, a prominent Boston-born portrait painter, completed his portrait in 1887, 22 years after Lincoln's assassination. It features a seated full figure of the president with his head resting thoughtfully on his bent right arm and hand, while his left arm seems poised to propel him up to a standing position.

Earlier, in 1860, Healy had the opportunity to do a painting of Lincoln from life, but the official, posthumous portrait had to be compiled from previous portraits of Lincoln. In the 1887 portrait, Healy has managed to capture something of the anxiety Lincoln must've felt as he tried to bridge a nation torn by civil war and slavery to a country united under freedom for all, regardless of the color of their skin.



The seated, monumental sculpture of Lincoln, completed by Daniel Chester French (1850–1931) for the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, D.C., however, has certainly surpassed the two-dimensional presidential portrait in popularity and national significance. This homage carved in marble has come to represent the concept of freedom for all Americans.

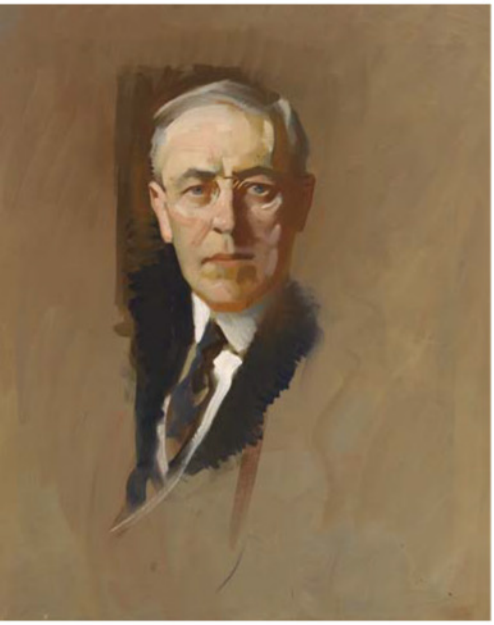
Interestingly, Lincoln was the first bearded president. Prior to 1861, all the presidents were clean shaven. For decades following Lincoln, every president sported a beard or—in the case of Grover Cleveland (No. 22 and 24), a mustache—with the exception of Andrew Johnson (No. 17), Lincoln's former vice president. The fashion would swing back to a clean-shaven face at the beginning of the 20th century, and has continued to the present.

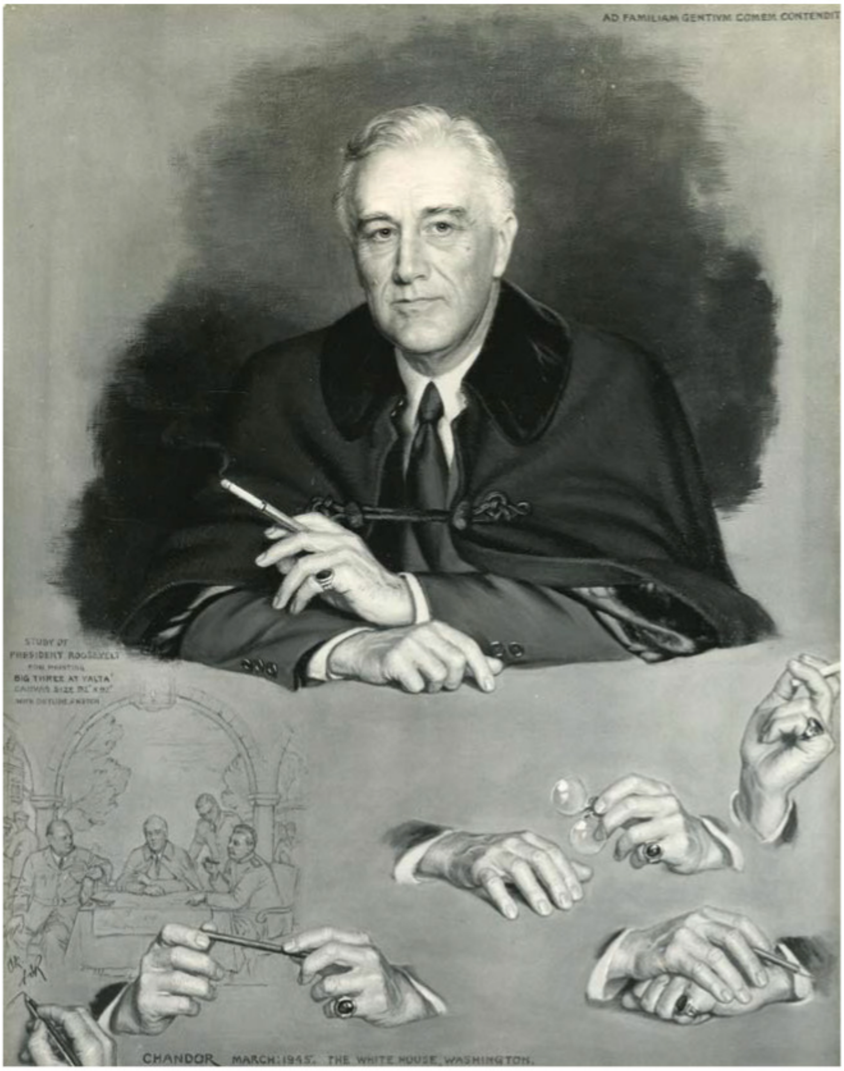
THE 20TH CENTURY

Woodrow Wilson (No. 28) was the first president to lead the nation following the devastating conflagration of World War I. The painting of Wilson (below) by Danish-born artist John Christen Johansen (1876–1964) was done in 1919, just a few months before Wilson had a stroke. While unfinished, this portrait seems fresh and more alive than most of the previous presidential portraits. Wilson's straightforward gaze challenges the viewer to engage in a relationship—a very daring modernist approach that mirrors Wilson's own bold ideas for rebuilding relationships between nations in the aftermath of war.

Like Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (No. 28) led the nation through years of crisis and war. His term started in the throes of the Great Depression and continued through an unprecedented third term, beginning in 1941 when the United States entered World War II. A fourth term ended with the President's death, in April of 1945.

In March of that year, British-born American portrait painter Douglas Chandor (1897–1953) painted a preparatory sketch of Roosevelt (below) from life for a group portrait that would include Winston Churchill and Joseph




AD FAMILIAM GENTIVM COMES CONTENDIT
STUDY OF
PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT
FOR PAINTING
BIG THREE AT YALTA'
WITH OUTLINE SKETCH
CHANDOR MARCH 1945 THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON

ABOVE
Woodrow Wilson (ca 1919; oil on canvas, 30⅓x25⅛) by John Christen Johansen

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; TRANSFER FROM THE SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM; GIFT OF AN ANONYMOUS DONOR, 1926. NPG.65.84

RIGHT
Franklin D. Roosevelt (ca 1945; oil on canvas, 43½x35½) by Douglas Chandor

OPPOSITE
John F. Kennedy (ca 1963; oil on canvas, 102½x44) by Elaine de Kooning

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; TRANSFER FROM THE SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM; GIFT OF AN ANONYMOUS DONOR, 1926. NPG.65.84

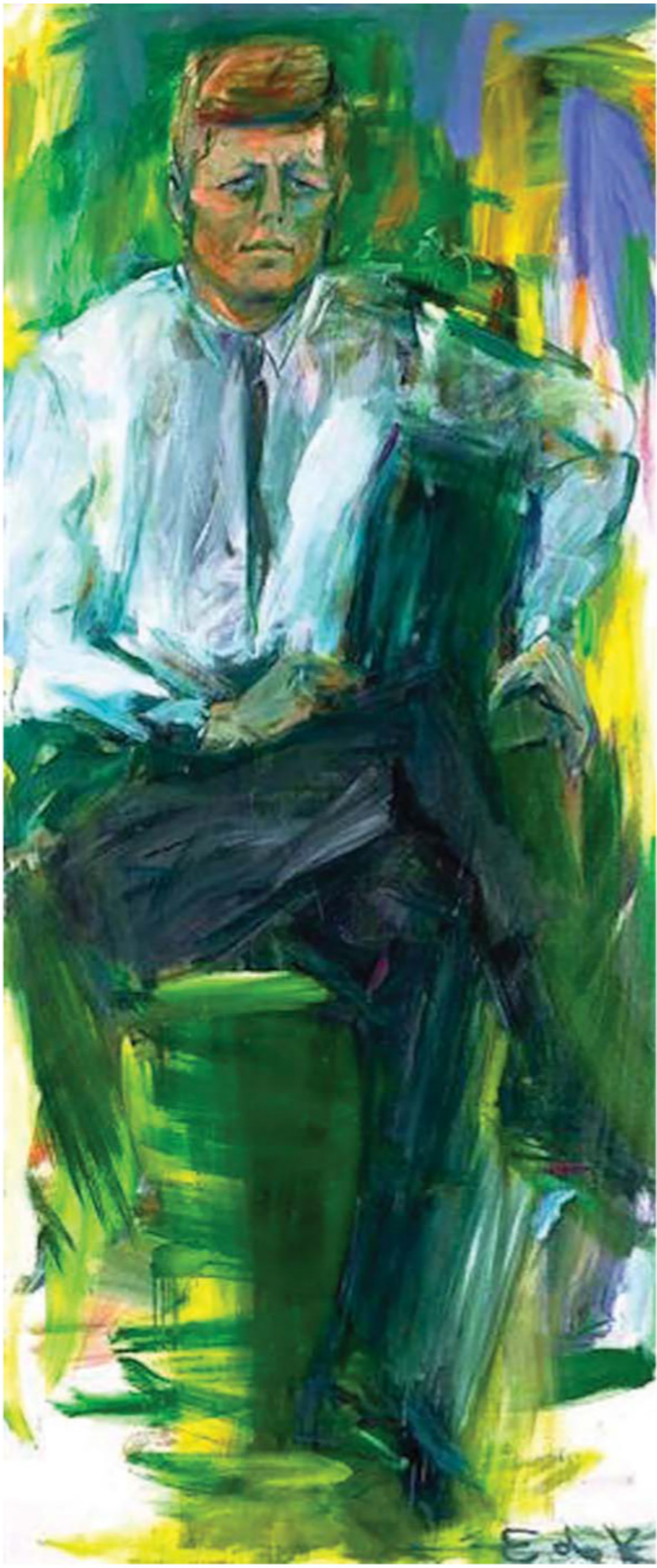
Stalin. Meant to memorialize the historic signing of the peace declaration at Yalta, the final group portrait was never completed because Stalin wouldn't sit for the artist. He sent a photo for the artist to work from, which Chandor found unacceptable.

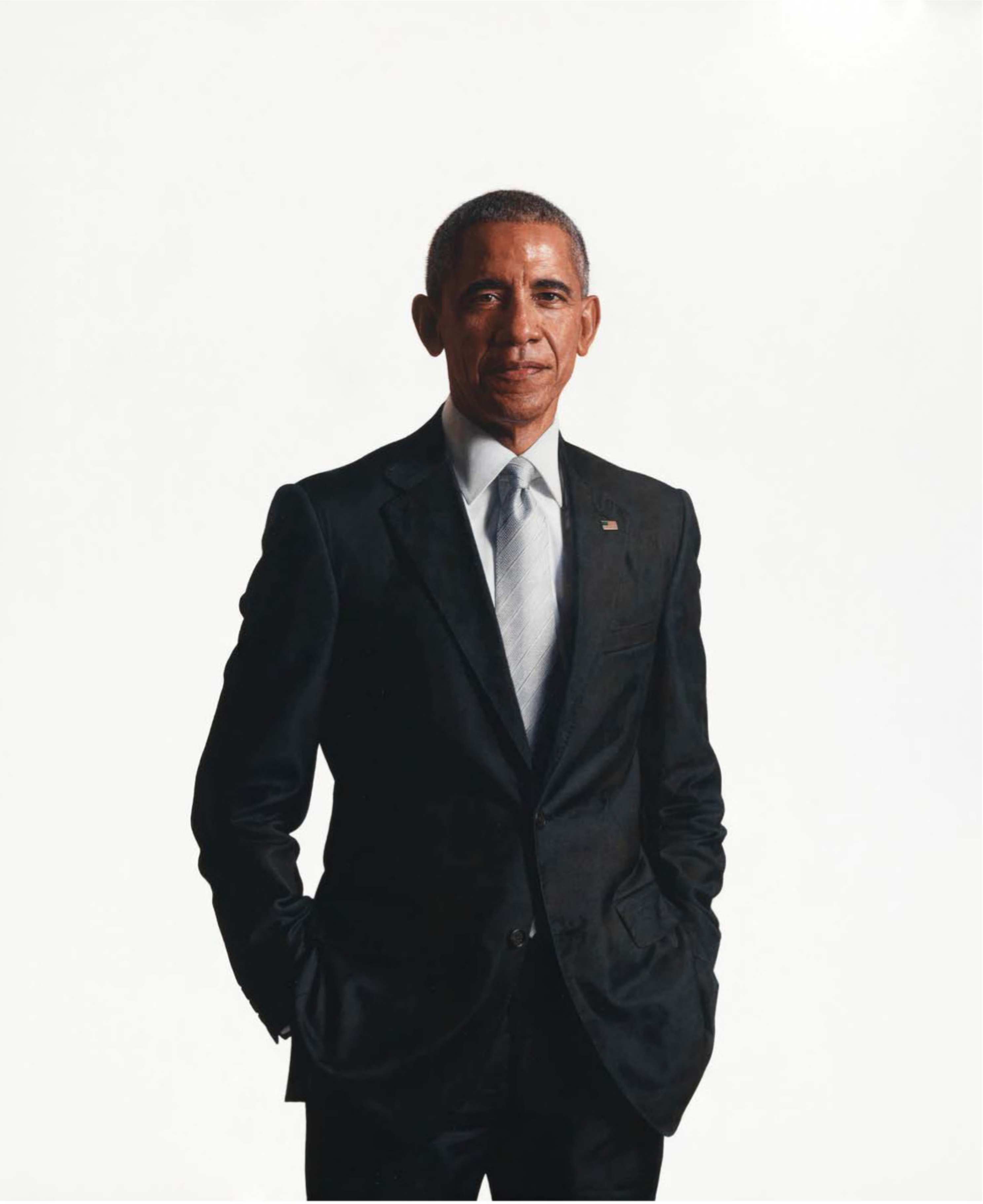
As with the Wilson portrait, this sketch on canvas is in many ways more revealing of the humanity of the president and of the artist's process than the more polished finished works. The sketch includes several lovely studies of Roosevelt's hands, which communicate some additional information about the man himself. Chandor's very appealing 1931 painting of the previous president, Herbert Hoover (No. 31) capitalizes on a complex rendering of multiple light sources and includes a deft compositional placement of Hoover's hands.

The assassination of John F. Kennedy (No. 35), in 1963, united Americans in a shared moment of grief not experienced since the murder of Abraham Lincoln. His presidency, though cut short, had an enormous impact on the country as it headed into some turbulent years. It was fitting, during the rise of Feminism, in the 1960s, that his portrait (right), created for the Truman Library, was the first to be painted by a female artist, the figurative expressionist Elaine de Kooning (1918–89). It was the most important commission of the artist's career.

De Kooning spent time with Kennedy in 1962 and 1963. His youthful energy inspired the artist to create hundreds of drawings and 23 finished paintings from those sessions. In an article for *Art News* in 1964, de Kooning reflected on her experience: "One of the reasons I was asked to do the portrait is that, with luck, I can start and finish a life-size portrait in one sitting," she said. "However, working at top speed this way, I require absolute immobility of the sitter. This was impossible with President Kennedy, because of his extreme restlessness. He read papers, talked on the phone, jotted down notes, crossed and uncrossed his legs, shifted from one arm of the chair to the other—always in action at rest. So, I had to find a completely new approach." Kennedy's life force has been captured forever in de Kooning's explosive strokes of blues and greens that dash across the canvas.

In a starkly different style from de Kooning, Norman Rockwell (1894–1978) one of America's most famous artists and a well-loved illustrator, had a difficult time painting the disgraced 37th President, Richard Nixon, the only Commander-in-Chief to resign from office. Rockwell found that Nixon's character eluded him, so he decided to paint a conservative, flattering portrait that he thought would at least please his subject.

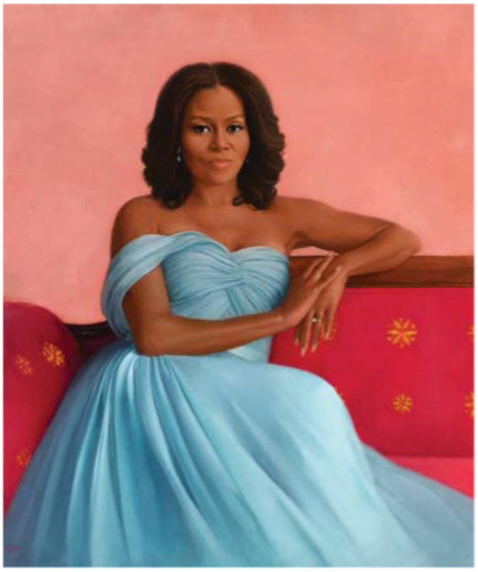




THE 21ST CENTURY

In 2018, the National Portrait Gallery unveiled the commissioned painting of our 44th President, Barack Obama, by Kehinde Wiley (1977–). The first African-American artist chosen to paint a presidential portrait, Wiley's groundbreaking contemporary approach (page 72) was greeted with mixed enthusiasm by art critics. Responding to the interest of the general public to see the portrait in-person, the National Portrait Gallery arranged a national tour that started at the Art Institute of Chicago, in June 2021, and ended at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, in October 2022.

The recent unveiling, in September 2022, of the official White House portrait of President Obama (opposite) reminds us of the legacy of this long-standing tradition and the role that artists play in reflecting the zeitgeist of their time while capturing a likeness of the most prominent people in American politics. White House portraits, separate from the National Gallery, are privately funded, and maintained by the White House Historical Association. Former president Obama chose artist Robert McCurdy (1952–), who created a photorealistic, exquisitely detailed painting of the president wearing a black suit and gray tie, standing in the center of the canvas against a stark white background. "Presidents so often get airbrushed, they even take on a mythical status," Obama said, according to the *Washington Post*, adding that "presidents and first ladies are human beings like everyone else." McCurdy is known for painstaking detail in works that can take more than a year to complete. Upon close examination, even the weave of the cloth of the president's suit can be seen.



ABOVE LEFT
Photograph of Julia Dent Grant
by Matthew Brady

ABOVE RIGHT
First Lady Michele Obama
(ca 2022; oil on panel, 44x36)
by Sharon Sprung

OPPOSITE
Untitled, Barack Obama
(ca 2022; oil on canvas, 53¾x48)
by Robert McCurdy

COURTESY OF WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION/ WHITE HOUSE COLLECTION

FIRST LADIES

Portraits have also been painted of presidential first ladies. Starting with Martha Washington, who was painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1796, portraits of first ladies reveal more about fashion and style during the time they lived than do the paintings of their husbands.

Not all first ladies were wives. Some of them were relatives—daughters, nieces, daughters-in-law—who served as White House hostesses. These portraits were sometimes created decades after the subjects had served and were realized in a wide variety of media, including the nascent technology of photography, as with the black-and-white portrait by one of America's most renowned early photographers, Mathew Brady (1822–96) of Julia Dent Grant (above), wife of the 18th president, Ulysses S. Grant.

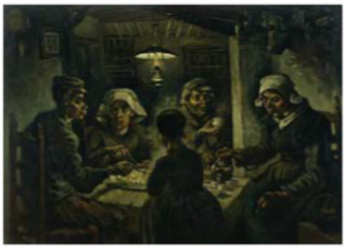
Former First Lady Michele Obama was captured on canvas (above) by Brooklyn-based artist Sharon Sprung (1953–), an instructor at the Art Students League of New York. Sprung seated Michele Obama on a formal red sofa. She appears elegant and alert, but relaxed in a softly draped cerulean blue gown. In both examples, the first ladies are looking directly at the viewer, inviting us to return their gaze. In an uplifting remark during the unveiling at the White House the former first lady said, "What we're looking at today—a portrait of a biracial kid with an unusual name and the daughter of a water pump operator and a stay-at-home mom—what we are seeing is a reminder that there's a place for everyone in this country."

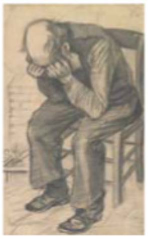
Cynthia Close (cynthiaclose.com) earned an MFA from Boston University and worked in various art-related roles before becoming a writer and editor.

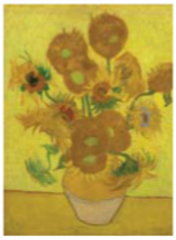
art news

Keeping you in the know

BY CYNTHIA CLOSE







CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS: BRUNO RIJSMAN (CC-BY-SA-2.0)

Potato Eaters (1885; oil on canvas, $32\frac{1}{5}$x$44\frac{4}{5}$) by Vincent van Gogh

VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS (VINCENT VAN GOGH FOUNDATION)

Sunflowers (1889; oil on canvas, $37\frac{2}{5}$x$28\frac{7}{10}$) by Vincent van Gogh

VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS (VINCENT VAN GOGH FOUNDATION)

Worn Out (1882; pencil on paper, $19\frac{4}{5}$x$12\frac{2}{5}$) by Vincent van Gogh

VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS (VINCENT VAN GOGH FOUNDATION)

During its 50th year, Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum goes all out celebrating its namesake artist.

Vincent van Gogh's dramatic life story embodies the stereotype of the tortured creative genius—an artist, unrecognized in his own time and suffering in isolation, who becomes famous after death. Founded in 1973, the Netherlands' Van Gogh Museum has become a must-visit venue for tourists from around the world who hope to gain some insight into van Gogh's legacy.

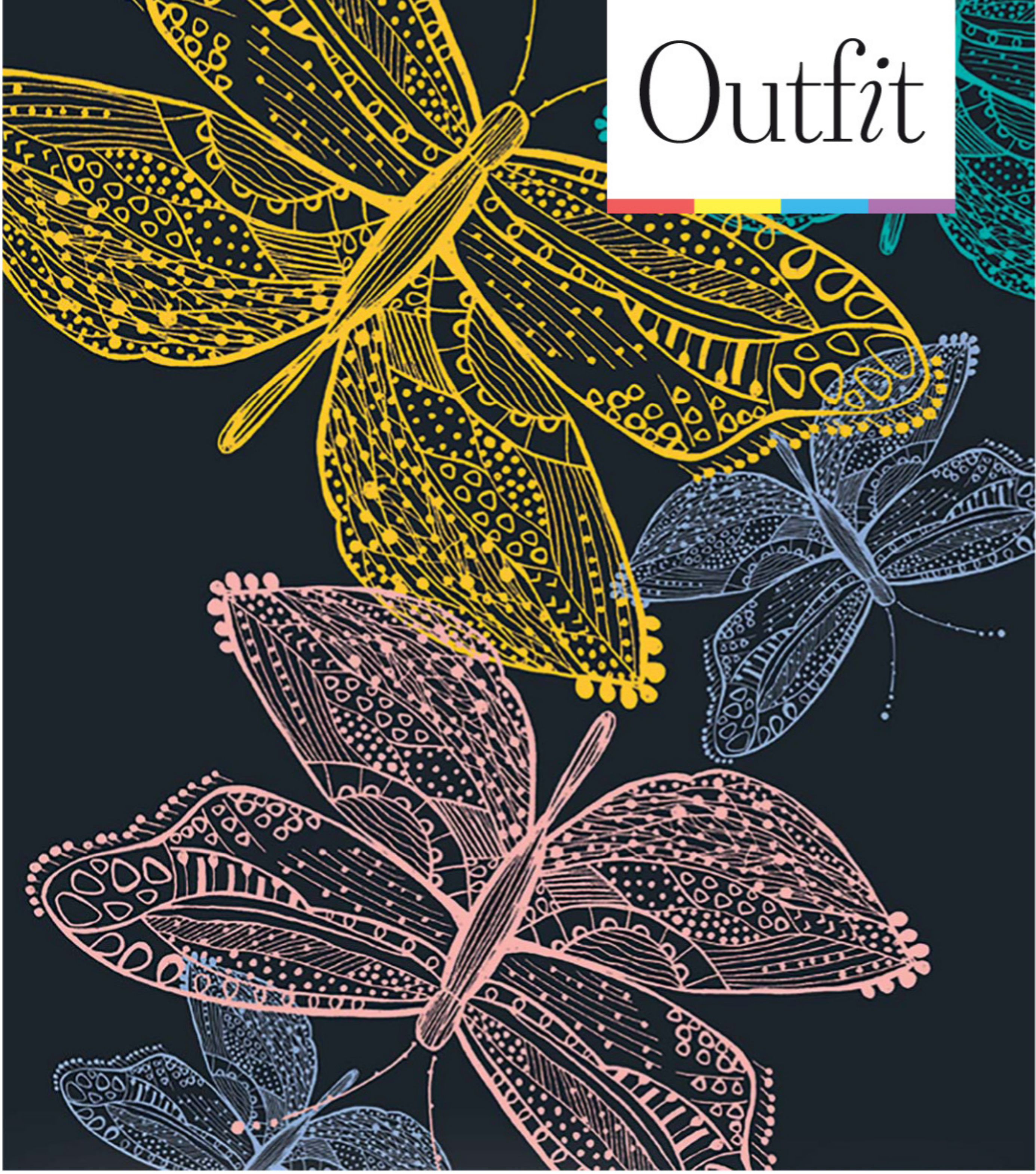
Artists recognized by a last name alone frequently become the subject not only of traditional museum exhibitions but also of popular forms of entertainment, such as movies, novels and even songs. It's not surprising, then, that van Gogh should be featured in the newest art-world obsession—immersive exhibitions. These multimedia extravaganzas, with their large digital reproductions of paintings and theatrical sets, have swept over the art world like a tsunami. Recently, a number of U.S. cities—at least seven—have hosted immersive presentations centered on the beloved artist. Naturally, the Van Gogh Museum has curated its own officially authorized immersive exhibition: "Meet Vincent van Gogh Experience." Packaged as a traveling show, it can be booked and adapted to a wide variety of spaces and institutions.

Van Gogh's struggles are well-known, but the Van Gogh Museum's 50th anniversary digs deeper into the artist's ouvre, exploring less familiar works and neglected periods of the artist's development. Early paintings such as *Potato Eaters* show the realist influence of Jean-François Millet (French; 1814–75). Van Gogh's pencil drawing *Worn Out* mirrors the despair not only of the elderly subject of the work but, perhaps, also of the artist himself. The drawing, however, further reveals van Gogh's mastery of form and perspective—foundational skills for the much-admired portraits, still lifes and landscapes created during the last five years of the artist's life.

It's easy to understand why we're drawn to the brilliant color of van Gogh's *Sunflowers* or why the magical *Starry Night* became one of the most widely reproduced paintings in all of Western art—but with more than 4,000 items in its collection, the Van Gogh Museum offers visitors much more to view and a unique opportunity to learn about this endlessly fascinating artist.

LEARN MORE

View a video overview of "Meet Vincent van Gogh Experience" at bit.ly/immersive-experience.



"IT'S IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT GROWTH CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE AND PAINFUL BUT ALSO NECESSARY AND BEAUTIFUL."

—RACHAEL TAYLOR

FROM *POWER UP YOUR CREATIVITY* (QUARRY BOOKS)

Butterfly Dance (detail; hand-drawn in black pen, scanned and then manipulated and colored in Adobe Photoshop) by Rachael Taylor

Commission Confidence

A successful artist-and-client relationship depends on a clear understanding of responsibilities and expectations.

By Daniel Grant

During exhibition openings, through the mail and over the telephone, art collectors regularly ask painter Scott Prior to produce works just for them. Sometimes, these collectors suggest an image they want him to paint. Most of the time, they simply tell him, "I want anything." Money and praise are offered, but Prior approaches these offers warily. "I'm not encouraging," he says. "For every 10 people who ask me to do something, I may work with one. When I don't know the person, how can I be confident there won't be problems down the road? I don't even know what the problems might be."

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

Actually, Prior does know, generally, what problems he might encounter, even when he doesn't know the particulars about a specific collector. He may find himself dickering over the price of a work with someone who thinks that going to the artist directly means paying less. "For me, it doesn't," says Prior. Commissioned paintings aren't shown in galleries, which means they offer nothing toward his main form of promotion. These works also hold less prestige than pictures initiated by the artist, and they take more time to produce because of the need for telephone conversations, meetings and other appointments. "Once I agreed to do a portrait of a woman who lives in Boston, 100 miles away from me," says Prior. "I realized that the time it was going to take to drive to Boston and back, take photographs and negotiate this, that and the other was more than I could spare. I had to write her a letter asking to be let out of our agreement because I just didn't know when I'd ever get to do the work."

Another potential problem is the possibility that the collector may not like the work when it's completed. "People wanting to commission a piece say, 'I have this in mind,' but it's hard to interpret what they *actually* have in mind," says Sue Furlan, studio manager for Santa Fe, N.M., sculptor Larry Bell. "There have been touchy situations where people haven't been satisfied."

Gregory Gillespie (1936–2000), known for his self-portraits, noted that when he was asked to do a portrait, he made two stipulations in his agreement: "First, the portrait may not be flattering, and it may not even look like you. Second, I can take as long as I want."

APPROACHES TO PRICING

In a larger sense, individually commissioned artwork is a variation of an artist's previous work rather than something new and original in itself. For that reason alone, commissioned work may be less interesting to create. On the other hand, since the commissioned piece will be based on past work, it may be easy to price. For Prior, the first step in arranging a commission of this type usually involves the collector coming to the artist's studio to look at earlier work—the actual pieces or photographs of them. He points out that this allows both he and the client to see whether there's anything the client likes.

On the other hand, New York sculptor Alice Aycock, says, "Anyone who would commission me would know my work pretty well." She and the collector have an extended conversation about what the individual wants, after which she makes a drawing of the proposed piece. "If that's approved, I'll price the work," she says.

Her price includes the entire cost of designing and creating the piece, plus a profit mark-up of between 10 and 20 percent. If the collector's price restraints come up early in the conversation, however, she can design to a budget.

NAILING DOWN THE DETAILS

Prior works on the basis of verbal agreements, but Aycock, who has received a number of both public and private commissions over the years, writes her own contracts. "I have enough contracts around that I can refer to when writing a new one," she says, although occasionally, she'll consult a lawyer. Items in her contracts include the following:

- How the work will be constructed and installed
- The scheduling of payments (usually in installments, such as one-third of the price as a deposit before the work is begun, another third when the piece is half done and the final third after the work is installed)
- When the work will be completed
- Who pays for insurance (for shipping and installing the work as well as for liability concerns)
- Who controls the design (the artist)
- Whether or not there can be alterations in the final work (Aycock maintains full power of approval or disapproval over requested alterations).

ALENTINRUSSANOV/GETTY IMAGES

Aycock's contracts also clearly state that she owns the copyright to the work, including photography rights. This means that if the client has the work photographed, and those images are reproduced in some manner—such as on a company's stationery—she can negotiate an extra fee.

Tom Eccles, former executive director of the Public Art Fund, in New York City, stated that a contract should describe how damage to the artwork will be handled. "You want to know whether the work will be restored or removed," he says. "You don't want something looking hideous out there with your name on it. That could be damaging to your reputation."

There may also be provisions for mediation to settle possible disputes or for legal expenses (in case the artist must sue for payment or other issues). The contract can stipulate reimbursements for travel (food, lodging, transportation) and specify framing arrangements, such as selection and payment.

At times, the collector or commissioning agent will initiate the writing of a contractual agreement. Artists can submit these contracts to a lawyer for review or if they don't fully understand the legal terminology. Neil Estern, who was selected by the federal government to be the main sculptor of the Roosevelt Memorial, in Washington, D.C., was sent a 40-page contract to sign. "Maybe seven of those pages referred to me and what I was going to be doing," says Estern. "They piled responsibilities on me that I didn't want, such as buying insurance that I don't want to carry, and taking care of crating and shipping that I didn't want to be responsible for. I rewrote those seven pages to make them more to my liking, and I never heard a complaint."

CLIENT APPROVALS

Art collectors viewing work at an exhibition exercise their approval of a piece by their decision to buy it. Commissioned work, on the other hand, usually involves an approval step during one or more stages of the creation process, such as at the design presentation, at the halfway point or at the completion of the work. Before taking on a commission, artists need to decide whether and when they'll allow clients to approve the work, but there's usually some need for flexibility. Commissioned art tends to be more collaborative, and the artist must be willing to work with the collector or commissioning agency during the process of creation.

This brings up issues of personal confidence and integrity. If the completed artwork is rejected, is the artwork suitable for the artist's gallery? This might be the case if the piece is comparable to an artist's general body of work, but perhaps less so for commissioned portraiture. Artists concerned about the possible financial loss might want to add an "acceptance upon proposal" clause to a contract, stating that, as long as the final work conforms to the proposal, the artist will be paid in full regardless of whether or not the collector likes the piece. There also could be a provision that the artist would be reimbursed for time and expenses if the work is not approved.

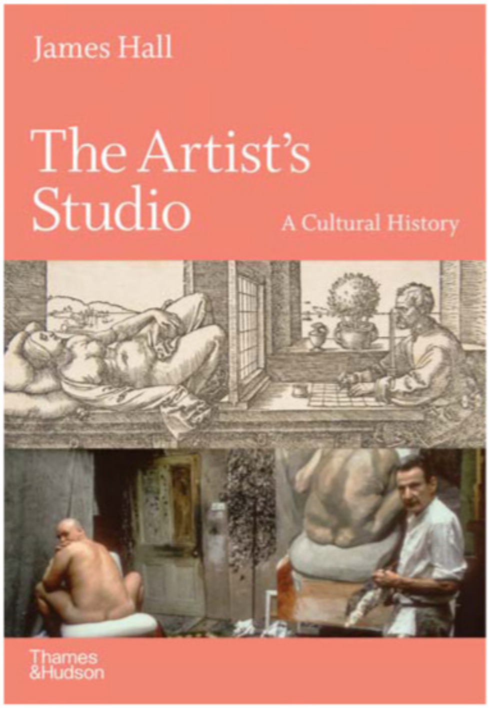
Being asked to create a commissioned work is a compliment, but it also entails concerns you may not have had to deal with in the past. By all means, enjoy the compliment, but proceed from that point with eyes open.

Daniel Grant is an arts writer and the author of six books on building a successful art career, including The Business of Being a Writer.

Independent Study

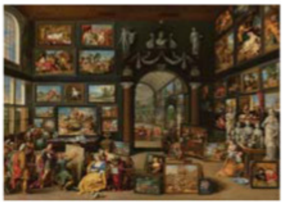
Resources to inspire + build skills

BY HOLLY DAVIS


James Hall
The Artist's Studio
A Cultural History
Thames & Hudson

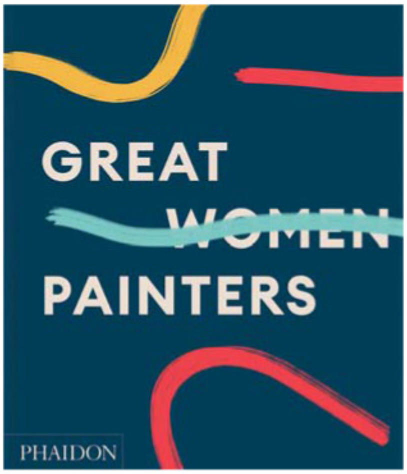
ARTIST AT WORK

All artists—be they painters, sculptors, photographers, writers or craftspeople—need a workplace, but that space could be anything from a shared artisans' workshop to a private space to a boat or the great outdoors. In the book **The Artist's Studio: A Cultural History** (Thames & Hudson), art critic and historian James Hall traces the development of creative spaces from ancient Greece to current times.



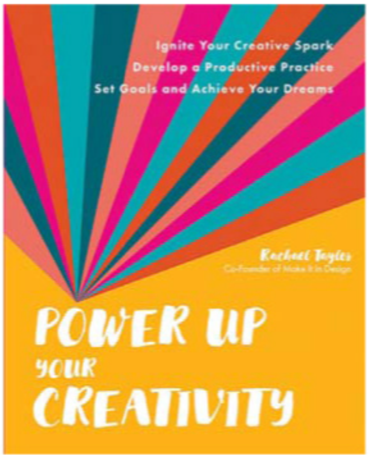
Apelles Painting Campaspe; (ca 1630; oil on panel, 41⅜x58⅝)

THE MAURITSHUIS, THE HAGUE


GREAT
WOMEN
PAINTERS
PHAIDON

JUST PLAIN GREAT

Female painters have been undervalued through the ages—but it hasn't been for lack of talent. **Great ~~Women~~ Painters** (Phaidon), written by Phaidon editors with an introduction by curator and writer Allison M. Gingeras, proves the point with artwork dating from the 16th to the 21st centuries by more than 300 female artists from 60 countries. Artists are presented alphabetically with a short commentary about their work and a reproduction of one of their paintings.


Ignite Your Creative Spark
Develop a Productive Practice
Set Goals and Achieve Your Dreams
Rachael Taylor
Co-Founder of Make It In Design
POWER UP YOUR CREATIVITY

Supercharge

Whether you're at the beginning of your art journey or somewhere in the middle and in need of a boost, you'll find inspiration from ***Power Up Your Creativity*** (Quarry Books). Author, artist and pattern designer Rachael Taylor offers prompts, exercises and down-to-earth advice to help you clarify your vision, set goals and evolve. All are key for staying the course over the ups and downs of a long and satisfying creative life.

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New York

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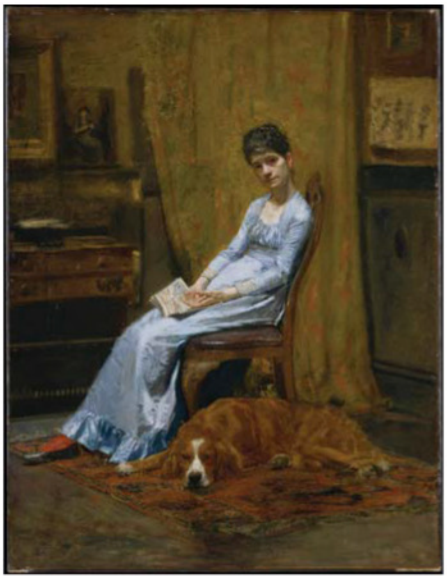

The Artist’s Wife and His Setter Dog (ca 1884-89; oil on canvas, 30x23) by Thomas Eakins

FLETCHER FUND, 1923. 23.139

WORKSHOPS 2023

Your Complete Guide to Workshops Here and Abroad

Artists never stop learning. Each new painting or drawing can bring another revelation, but when you want to learn more about a specific technique, medium or style, you can’t do better than to take a workshop. Start planning now. Check out the following listings for one or many workshops just right for you.

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Workshops

Annie Strack

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Visit AnnieStrackArt.com for a complete listing of workshops, classes, and demos. Email Info@AnnieStrackArt.com for more info.

Coastal Maine Art Workshops

These classes are in our Rockland, ME Studio on the water! Check our website for updates to the schedule.

July 17–21, 2023, Ann Larsen, Simplifying the Maine Coast! Oils/Acryl/Pastels. All Levels. Plein air/Studio.

August 7–11, 2023, Joe Lombardo, Coastal Maine Plein Air! Oils/Acryl. All levels. Plein Air/Studio.

August 14–18, 2023, Eric Jacobsen, Painting Expressive Seascapes! Oils/Acryl. Int-Adv. Plein Air/Studio.

August 21–25, 2023, Paul George, Loose & Winning Watercolors! WC All Levels. Studio/Plein air.

August 28–September 1, 2023, Keiko Tanabe, Improving the Composition! WC Int-Adv. Plein Air/Studio

September 18–22, 2023, Larry Moore, Abstraction from Nature! Gouache/Oils/Acryl. Int-Adv. Plein Air/Studio.

September 25–29, 2023, Bethanne Kinsella-Cople, Essence of Landscape! Oils/Acryl. Int/Adv. Plein Air/Studio.

October 2–6, 2023, Colley Whisson, Modern Impressionism in Action! Oils/Acryl. All Levels. Plein Air/Studio.

Contact: Lyn Donovan
P.O. Box 845, Camden, ME 04843
207-594-4813, cmartworkshops@gmail.com
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Creative Art Workshops

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Huntsville Museum Of Art

March 30–April 01, 2023, Alan Pastrana, Airbrush Painting Techniques

April 14–15, 2023, Lynnette Hesser & Steve Loucks, Ceramics: Serve with Finesse

April 21–22, 2023, Alan Shuptrine, Water Gilding

May 19–21, 2023, Ann Moeller Steverson, Portraits: Beautiful Skin Tones

August 17–20, 2023, Qiang Huang, Figurative in Landscape

September 11–14, 2023, Tony Couch, Watercolor Painting

October 05–07, 2023, Rania Matar, Photography, The Portrait: Expressing Identity

October 19–22, 2023, David Shevlino, Alla Prima Portrait Painting

November 01–04, 2023, Liz Haywood-Sullivan, Painting Brilliant Skies & Water in Pastel

Contact: Laura E. Smith, Director of Education/Museum Academy,256/535-6372
lsmith@hsvmuseum.org or hsvmuseum.org

Shenandoah Art Destination

The Shenandoah Art Destination is magnificently located near the historic town of Lexington, nestled in the Shenandoah Valley. The owners, Jan-Willem & Nancy Boer, offer an ideal creative vacation and inspiration for all art lovers of any ability. The fee for your stay is all-inclusive – accommodations (private room and bath), meals (home-cooked), and art instruction. Pick-up from local airports and train station available for nominal fee. All artists are welcome from the beginner to the professional for painting (all media), drawing and printmaking. Daily course guidance/tutelage by your host, Jan-Willem Boer, an established artist and illustrator for over 25 years in the USA & Europe, earning his degree from the Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Each day there is a focus on a different skill with much one-on-one instruction. The facility is set up with two great indoor studios and many wonderful outdoor locations for plein-air painting. It is the perfect setting to focus on art and at the same time have a refreshing vacation. Courses run from early spring to late autumn; visit the website for cost and more information. Non-participating spouse/partner is also welcome. Visit the reviews of previous participants on Google Reviews.

Featured in the Washington Post Travel Magazine 9/13/15: http://t.co/bDaZdFZ9Cj

March 31–April 02, 2023, Weekend
April 20–23, 2023, 4-Day
April 27–May 02, 2023, 6-Day
May 05–08, 2023, 4-Day
May 18–21, 2023, 4-Day
June 02–04, 2023, Weekend
June 08–11, 2023, 4-Day
June 25–30, 2023, 6-Day
July 13–16, 2023, 4-Day
July 21–26, 2023, 6-Day
August 18–20, 2023, Weekend
August 24–27, 2023, 4-Day
September 08–13, **2023,** 6-Day Plein-air/Maine
October 15–24, 2023, 10-Day Plein-air/Morocco

Email: nancy@shenandoahartdestination.com
Website: www.ShenandoahArtDestination.com

William Jameson

These workshops are open for beginners to advanced, with one-to-one instruction in watercolor, oil, acrylic, and pen and ink sketching. Participants may work in any or all media. A materials list will be sent to all participants.

The number of painters in all workshops is limited so we encourage you to send in the Enrollment Form and a deposit. Overnight space in these small towns can also be scarce during peak times so early reservations are also suggested.

I am also available for workshops at your location with your group!

March 9-11, 2023, Saluda, North Carolina
"Building BETTER Paintings", Ransom Road Studios, 519 Ransom Road. This is an opportunity to try something different from what has been your norm. We will work with different sizes to understand which configurations are better in smaller or bigger formats. The 3-day workshop is six hours daily and photographic references can be provided, or you may bring your own.

On Wednesday, March 8th we will have our "get acquainted (or reacquainted) get together" at our home and studio.

May 11-13, 2023, Saluda, North Carolina
"Spring Greens", Ransom Road Studios, 519 Ransom Road. In Spring, these mountains rival Ireland in the number and amount of "greens". The different hues blanket the scene with fresh avocado, emerald, lime, and jade shades that are close to unbelievable! The Spring foliage is a real awakening for the senses and the greens just beg to be captured on canvas. Daily, we will begin in the studio with demos and discussion, then continue the day painting "plein-air" at great sites where we will work to interpret these Spring colors in and around Saluda. We will be practicing "social distancing" which suits plein air painters perfectly!

On Wednesday, May 10th, we will have our "get acquainted (or reacquainted) get together" at our home and studio.

June 26-28, 2023, Blowing Rock, North Carolina
"Summer on the Blue Ridge". The are many reasons to visit this charming town in the higher elevations and one, we hope, is to participate in this fun and educational painting experience! We are invited to hold this workshop at Hound Ears Club (houndears.com) where we will have a comfortable and attractive "studio space" for our three days of fine tuning our composition and color skills. This workshop is open for beginner to advanced painters and photo references will be available or you may bring your own. There will be daily discussion, demonstrations, one to one instruction and more details will be posted on my website closer to the event. As spaces are very limited, please contact Bill (not the club) ASAP at billjameson0593@gmail.com to register for this summer workshop sponsored by Blowing Rock Frameworks and Gallery, 7539 Valley Boulevard.

Please contact Bill at 843.729.0593 or billjameson0593@gmail.com for further information or registration.

The next Workshop Section will appear in the
Artists Magazine May/June 2023 issue.
Space Reservation is by February 21, 2023.
Newsstand Date is April 25, 2023

Don't miss your chance to advertise in the next issue!

Artists Magazine

Stephanie Rubin
srubin@goldenpeakmedia.com
970-223-3676

Call For Entries

DEADLINE: MARCH 15, 2023

55TH WATERCOLOR WEST INTERNATIONAL JURIED EXHIBITION

Online Entry Only. Juror: Michael Reardon. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, $2000, $1500, $1000, +++. Entry Fee for 1–2 entries is $75 non-members, $50 members. Only transparent watercolor on rag paper. Exhibition from July 8 to August 12, 2023, Art Gallery at Coastline College, Newport Beach, CA. For prospectus, visit www.watercolorwest.org
Workshop with Michael Reardon: June 14-16, 2023
Juror Demo: June 17, 2023
Workshop with Geoff Allen: August 12, 2023

DEADLINE: APRIL 17

GREEN MOUNTAIN WATERCOLOR EXHIBITION

Exhibition dates: June 18 to July 22, 2023
11th annual exhibition sponsored by Mad River Valley Arts in Waitsfield, Vermont. Open to all artists working in watercolor, gouache and water based inks. Cash and merchandise awards exceeding $8000. Tim Saternow, AWS judge of awards.
Enter at www.onlinejuriedshows.com
Info: Gary Eckhart, curator, 802-583-2224

DEADLINE: JUNE 2, 2023

NATIONAL WATERCOLOR SOCIETY

2023 103rd International Open Exhibition.
Entries open April 1 thru June 2, 2023. Exhibition dates, Oct. 1 thru Nov. 15, 2023. Selection jurors: Ruth Armitage, Jean Pederson, Thomas Schaller. Awards juror: Janine Gallizia. Over $40,000 Awards. Exhibition to be held in the NWS San Pedro, CA gallery

DEADLINE: JULY 1, 2023

AQUEOUS USA 2023 EXHIBITION
KENTUCKY WATERCOLOR SOCIETY

46th Annual Juried Exhibition
July 27–September 16th, 2023, Preston Art Center, Henderson, KY. Juror: Dong Feng Li. Awards of cash and merchandise. For more information and prospectus visit KENTUCKYWATERCOLORSOCIETY.COM

DEADLINE: AUGUST 29, 2023

ARTISTS MAGAZINE 40TH ANNUAL ART COMPETITION

Open to all traditional media in five categories, this is our biggest competition of the year and honors work from outstanding artists working in a variety of art media. Enter to win more than $23,000 in cash prizes. This year's Grand Prize Award is $3,000 cash and the winning artwork will be featured on the cover of the Jan/Feb 2024 issue Artists Magazine! Category jurors are Dean Mitchell (Portrait & Figure), Jeffrey T. Larson (Still Life & Interior), Koo Schadler (Animal & Wildlife), John Salminen (Landscape) and Kristy Gordon (Abstract & Experimental). Enter early and enjoy discounted entry fees (Super Early Bird deadline ends April 23rd, 2023).
www.artistsnetwork.com/art-competitions/artists-magazine-annual/

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Entries Open
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Jurors of Selection
Janine Gallizia - Awards Juror
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NATIONAL WATERCOLOR SOCIETY
103rd International Open Exhibition

All-inclusive ART VACATION in the Shenandoah Valley
(art instruction, meals and lodging)
for art lovers of all abilities.
Courses include: drawing/painting/print making

April-October Tel: 612.221.1140
For course schedule & costs see
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Nancy@shenandoahartdestination.com

Info??? Contact us!
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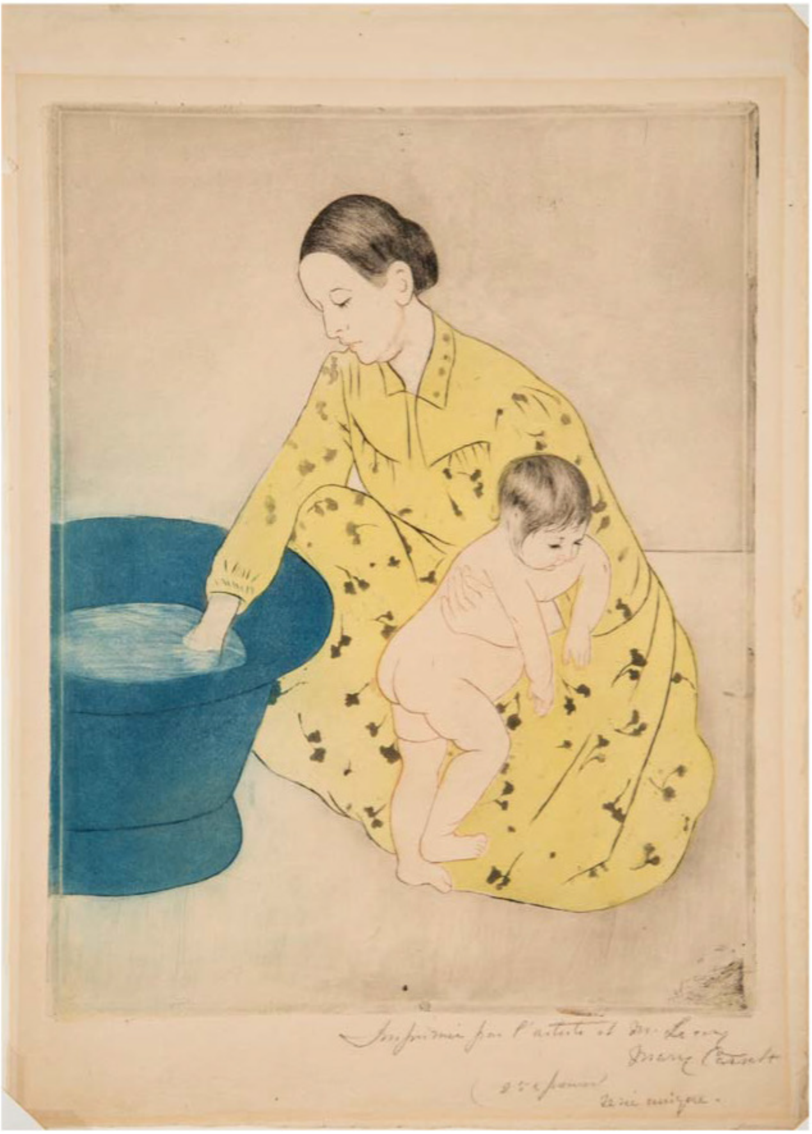
Lasting impression

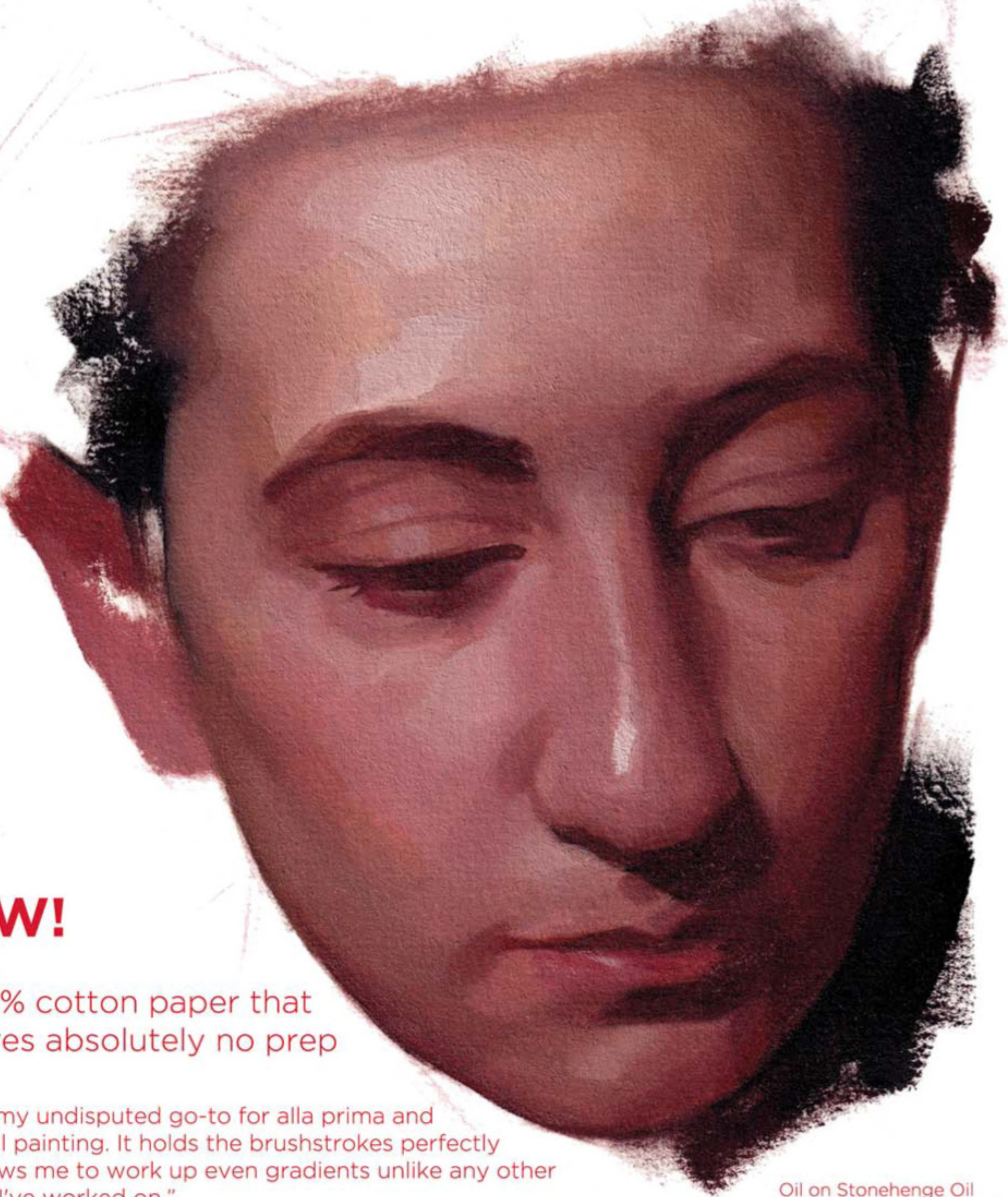


The Bath
(1891; soft ground etching with aquatint and drypoint on paper, 12⅜x9⅝)
by Mary Cassatt
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

“*Inspired by a major exhibition of* Japanese woodcuts she saw at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, American Impressionist Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) created a suite of 10 prints in 1891. The dynamic, experimental works were intended to achieve similar visual effects to Japanese printmaking, including patterns, bold forms and flat, asymmetrical spaces. Cassatt used drypoint to produce the fine, delicate outlines of the figures’ bodies, hair and faces, while aquatint allowed for large, flat areas of saturated color; in this case, the bright yellow dress and blue tub of water. Cassatt’s quiet, intimate portrayals combined with innovative techniques of graphic art marked the artist as a pioneer of 19th-century color printmaking.”

ORIN ZAHRA
Associate Curator,
National Museum of
Women in the Arts

GIFT OF WALLACE AND WILHELMINA HOLLADAY; PHOTO BY LEE STALSWORTH.



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